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Confession 1851

SERMONS,

WITH

AN ESSAY

ON THE RIGHT INTERPRETATION AND UNDERSTANDING
OF THE SCRIPTURES.

BY

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PREFACE.

OF the Sermons contained in this volume, the first twenty-eight and the thirty-fourth were preached in the chapel of Rugby School. They were addressed, therefore, to a peculiar congregation ; but as the faults against which they are directed are more or less common to all schools, I thought that they might be useful to others besides those for whom they were originally designed.

The remaining five sermons were preached at different places, to congregations of the usual character. They were all written within the last fifteen months,—that is, since the beginning of that aggravated state of disorder in our social relations, which now wears so threatening an aspect. But the views which they contain I have entertained for many years, and have long anticipated the crisis which has come upon us. Would it were as easy to discover the remedies for the evil, now that it is come, as it was to foresee that it must come.

In one sermon, the thirty-second, there may seem an inconsistency with the sentiments expressed in the seventeenth sermon of my former volume. If it were so, I should very little regard it: for as it is great presumption in any man to think himself so certainly right in all his opinions, as to refuse to reconsider them, so it is great weakness or great dishonesty to conceal such alterations in them, as further inquiry may have wrought. But, in the present instance, the difference between the two sermons in question is no more than this; that what I considered in the former volume as by far the best and happiest alternative of the two ways of making nominal and real Christianity more generally identical, I have now dwelt upon, not only as the best, but as the one which we must assiduously labour in our practice to carry into effect. The Church of Christ was originally distinct from the National Society, to which its members belonged, as citizens or subjects. It was promised, that these National Societies should become Christian Societies; and so they have become, but, unfortunately, not so entirely in spirit as in name. Hence, many good men wish the two Societies to be again distinct: believing, that the Church is more likely to be secularized by the union, than the nation is to be Christianized. And, doubtless, as things are and have been, this belief has too much to warrant it. But, on the other hand, as things ought to be, and

as I believe they yet may be, the happier alternative is the one to be looked to; namely, the carrying forward God's work to its completion,—the making the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of Christ; not partially or almost, but altogether, in spirit, and in truth. It is certainly very bad to remain as we are: and to go back to the original state of the Church would be most desirable, if we could have no hope of going on to that glorious state of perfection for which Christ designed it. But this hope is too precious to be lightly abandoned; and our present state is a step to something better, however little we have chosen to make it so; the means are yet in our hands, which it seems far better to use even at the eleventh hour, than desperately to throw them away.

RYDAL,

Dec. 19th, 1831.

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SERMON I.

HEBREWS xi. 1.

Now Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

EVERY one, who has ever heard so much as the very name of Christianity, knows how much the word Faith has to do with it: he may not know what it means, still less may he know all that it means; but still he knows that it has a great deal to do with religion, that a great deal of stress has been laid upon it, and a great deal said and written for and against it. He knows too that it is a word of which he does not hear much, except as connected with religion: that it is not like honesty, honour, courage, wisdom, kindness, cruelty, &c.; that is, a thing which is continually brought forward in common life, which all seem to understand, and all, in word at least, to value. He knows, in short, that it is something peculiar to religion, and in an especial manner peculiar to the religion of Christ.

So in truth it is: it is among the most perfect proofs of God's wisdom, to those who can understand, that in his revelation to man he has taken hold in a manner, if I may so speak, of that one part of our nature which was lying most neglected, and yet in which the seed of our highest perfection is alone to be found. Faith is indeed that which most raises us from a state of brute selfishness and brute ignorance, and leading us on gradually, according to our gradual growth, from one high object to another, ends by offering to the mind of the Christian the most perfect object of all, even God himself, our Father, and Saviour, and Sanctifier. And again, as faith is so powerful and so excellent when once awakened, and steadily kept alive, so it is that part of our nature in which the effects of our corruption are seen most strongly. Infinitely different as are the causes which check and destroy it at different ages, in different stations, and in different characters, still all of us at every part of our lives must feel that it is in a manner our weak point; and all of us have the greatest need to join in the prayer of the original disciples of Christ, and to say to him as they did, "Lord, increase our faith."

But now comes the question, What is faith? And as an answer to it I have chosen the words of the text; "It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." That is to

say, it is that feeling or faculty within us, by which the future becomes to our minds greater than the present: and what we do not see, more powerful to influence us than what we do see. But perhaps some few common instances will explain what I mean more fully.

I will take, first, one of the simplest and lowest. A child is told by his parents to be careful and tidy; he is threatened with punishment if he is not so; he is promised some little reward if he is. The parents are not present; the punishment and the reward are not actually before the eyes of the child; while the temptation is: that is to say, he feels that it is a trouble to put his things together, and that at the very moment when he sees something which he wishes to be doing immediately. Now, then, if he thinks more of the future reward and punishment than of the present trouble and pleasure; if he cares more for his parents, whom he may not see for an hour or two, than for the plaything which lies before his eyes; if he accordingly puts his things together, and is careful and tidy, then this child has, after his humble measure, acted by faith; he has gained some experience of that principle which, if he is a follower of Jesus, must be the guide of his life till that hour when all earthly things shall pass away.

I have purposely begun with an instance of

the humblest kind; let us now ascend a step higher. A boy is told by his parents that over eating and drinking will make him ill; it may be not immediately, but that he will in all probability feel the effects of it before he has gone on long. Here the evil threatened is not only more distant, but it is not absolutely certain. The trial of faith then is somewhat greater: for the temptation here, as in all cases, is present and before his eyes; the evil of yielding to it is future, and he can only see it with his mind. Here, too, if the future prevails over the present, the unseen over that which is seen, the boy has acted by faith, and in proportion as the faith had to look to a more distant object, so it was stronger and more advanced than that of the child.

We will proceed a little further still. A boy is told by his parents to exert himself in learning his lessons: he is told that habits of idleness will become stronger the longer he indulges them; that much of his future prospects in life will depend on his own conduct now; that the study which is now so irksome to him will in time, if steadily pursued, reward him by the pleasures of knowledge, which he will then find abundantly worth all the trouble it cost him to arrive at them. Here again the good thing promised is not only still more distant, but it is of a nature which the boy to whom it is offered cannot fully

understand. In the other case, he knew what it was to be sick; he fully understood that it was painful and disagreeable; but of the pleasures of knowledge, or the inconveniences of ignorance, he can have but a very faint and vague idea. If, then, although the good thing promised him be not only distant, but is one which he cannot fully understand; if, believing what his parents tell him, he overcomes the present temptation of idleness in the hope of a distant and indistinctly understood reward, here is an instance of faith yet stronger and of a fuller stature; and every one sees that the character is in a high degree ennobled and improved by acting under its influence.

I have been speaking hitherto of Faith; yet I have spoken of it as quite distinct from Religion or Christianity. It is very true, that if we knew nothing of God, still there would be the same feeling of preferring the future and the unseen to the present, and to that which is seen; and that this feeling, wherever it existed, would raise and improve the mind. And it is true, also, I think, that God intends us to learn how we ought to feel towards him, by feeling first so towards our parents: they are a child's first appointed objects of faith, and hope, and love. But the moment that we are told of God, we see at once that he is an object of faith, far more excellent than any other, and that it is when directed

towards him, that the feeling can be brought forwards to its full perfection. I supposed, that the commands given to the child in the three former instances, were *given by his parents*; that is to say, by persons whom he knew to be worthy of belief, because they loved him dearly, and wished his good, and understood how to take care of him far better than he did himself. It is a very necessary part of faith, that the thing which we believe be told us by some one whom we have reason for believing;—some one whom we know to be, so far as we are concerned, good and wise. Now a child's parents are to him so good and so wise, that it becomes properly an act of faith in him to take their word; yet still we know, and children very soon learn to know, that parents are very far from being quite good and quite wise: they may therefore hold out hopes and fears which it may not be quite safe to build upon. But the moment we are told of God,—so perfect in wisdom, so perfect in goodness, so perfect in power,—we find one on whose assurance we may rely with a most certain trust; and whose commands will be as good and wise, as the fulfilment of his threats and promises will be sure. Our heavenly Father is, in this respect, all that our earthly parents are or can be to us, and all in a degree infinitely more excellent. Again, I said it was a greater trial of faith when the good or the evil expected was distant,

and still greater, when it was not only distant, but imperfectly understood. Now the good and evil which God promises and threatens to Christians is so distant, that it will only come after our earthly lives are over; it is so imperfectly understood, that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God has prepared for them that love him;—nor yet, I may add, the wrath which he has prepared for those who do not love him. So, then, faith in God, in his promises, and his threatenings, seems to be perfect in all the points required to perfect it; it rests on the word of Him who is all good, all wise, and all powerful; it points to objects so distant, that faith must be strong and well matured, in order to reach to them; it encourages and terrifies, by blessings and miseries so far removed from our present conceptions, that the faith must be far more powerful which can overcome actual temptations by dwelling on objects, which our understandings are as unable to grasp fully, as our bodily eyes and ears to see and to hear them.

This, then, is religious faith;—but there is yet a peculiar species of religious faith, which is more excellent and more powerful than all the others, and which, therefore, is not unfrequently called in scripture, in a particular manner, by the common name of Faith. I am now speaking of

Christian Faith ; that is, not only a faith in God, our heavenly Father, but a faith in God, as he has revealed himself to us in the New Testament ; that is, in God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the reason why this Christian faith is so much more excellent than any other kind, even of religious faith, is because it shows us more of God's perfections than any other ; and from that view becomes even yet stronger, and more pure, and more self-abandoning. I know well enough that here I am approaching ground on which, unhappily, I cannot, to all my hearers, make myself fully understood. Many there are, and ever will be in every congregation, to whom the word of salvation through the blood of Christ, will be as hard and as uninteresting a saying, as it was to those Jews who followed Christ by the sea of Galilee, because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled, but who turned back and walked no more with him, when he spoke of the bread of life ; and yet more when he told them, that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood. I know that all cannot receive the words of the kingdom of heaven, because their hearts and minds are so little heavenly. Of faith in our parents' promises we can all understand, however little we practise it ;—even religious faith, in its more general sense, is not wholly out of our reach : but when we come to Christian faith, so simple and so natural to those

who have first believed their parents' word, and have early learnt from them to believe and love God's also, we find it hard and wholly unattractive to those who have never been in the habit of believing either. How can such understand the excellence of Christian faith, which shows to us God so pure, that he must punish the sinner, and yet so loving to us, that he gave his only-begotten Son to save us from our sins? How can they, who are so vain of every little good thing they do, and who so quickly forget every thing that they do evil; how can they understand a faith which has learnt so much of God and of itself, as to feel that all its good deeds are less than nothing when compared with an eternal reward—that its evil deeds are so many and so hateful to God, that it finds not in itself how to escape from the sentence of his justice? In short, how can they, who live wholly by sight, who do not *practise* even the lower kinds of faith, how can they so much as understand the highest? Yet, as without that highest faith we cannot be saved,—as you, all of you, and I too, are living either in and by this faith, or in the assured and daily increasing wrath of God, as we have peace with him through Jesus Christ, or have no peace at all, and shall have none for ever, and our state is only the more hopeless, for our being so fatally blind to it,—so I must strive to lay before you, in some future

sermons, the nature and uses of Christian Faith ; hoping and praying that the attempt may be blessed by the Spirit of God to your benefit, and that it may not be to me a double condemnation, if, while I speak of it to others, I have it not practically for my own soul's deliverance.

SERMON II.

1 JOHN v. 4, 5.

*This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.
Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth
that Jesus is the Son of God ?*

I SPOKE in my sermon last Sunday of Faith in its more general sense : first, of faith as exercised by a child towards his parents, and afterwards, of religious faith, according to that description of it in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where he says, “ that he who cometh to God, must first believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him.” I then proposed to speak more particularly of Christian faith, and to show how this was the most perfect kind of all, and most powerful to give us the victory over all temptations. And it is this part of the subject which I must now endeavour to lay before you as clearly as I am able.

We must remember how faith was described to be a preferring some future and unseen good to a present and visible one, on the authority of some

one whom we had reason to think good and wise. And we must remember also that religious faith consisted in preferring future to present good things, on the authority of God himself; that is, of One who is perfectly wise and good. That is to say, we may suppose a man influenced by religious faith to say thus to himself: "I know that the present temptation is very strong; but then I have the promise of God, who cannot lie, that, to serve him faithfully, will be better for me than any thing else in the world; and trusting to his word, I will forego the present pleasure, in the hope of that future blessing which he promises." It is plain that this faith or trust in God rests upon our belief of his goodness, wisdom, and power, however we may have gained our knowledge of these attributes; and it will be readily seen, that in proportion as our impression of God's perfections is more lively, so will our readiness to trust to him entirely be stronger, and more unhesitating. This is no more than we see at once to be the case in our human relations. It may be that a child who has never seen his father, may be very desirous to obey him, and to trust to his instructions, because he knows that he is his father, and has a general impression of his kindness and wisdom; but it is clear that he would obey him much more readily, and rely upon his counsels much more fully, if he had a close personal knowledge of him, and had seen and

experienced the excellencies of his character in a variety of particular instances.

Christian faith, then, has this advantage over simple religious faith, in the more general sense of the word, that, having obtained clearer and fuller notions of God's perfections, it is rendered stronger and more triumphant over temptations. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Even they who do believe this, find the world sufficiently dangerous, and the victory sufficiently difficult; but they who have not this faith find the victory more than difficult—it is altogether impossible. And they who have it in word only, or in whom it only exercises its power occasionally, will practically derive no greater benefit from it than those who have it not at all.

Now, Christian faith, or the faith that Jesus is the Son of God, gives us so much clearer and fuller notions of God, that it makes us know both him and ourselves, and love him, far better than we could do without it. We had a general notion, by mere religious faith, that God was a holy God, and that he must judge far differently of sin from the judgment that we are accustomed to pass on it. But Christian faith makes us say to ourselves, "I see how very much God must abhor sin, since, without the precious blood of his own Son, there could be no remission for it." Again, natural religion tells us that God is merciful; but Chris-

tian faith makes us say, "How can I be thankful enough to the infinite goodness of God, since he has given his only-begotten Son to die for me?" Again, natural religion teaches us to think humbly of ourselves, and to look to God for strength to help us. But the Christian says, "If the only-begotten Son of God has died for me, it is clear that my own deeds could do nothing for me in God's judgment; it is clear that they are too worthless to weigh a hair in the scale, when put with the infinite value of Christ's sacrifice. And if Christ has obtained for me, by his death and rising again, the gift of the Holy Ghost, it is clear that he that is with me is greater than he that is against me, and that I may struggle with confidence against my temptations, knowing that in that struggle the Eternal Spirit of God will aid me." Further, the very simplest notions of God tell us, that holy things and holy places must not be profaned by the mixture of evil. But the Christian thinks, "My body is a holy thing, for God has redeemed it; my heart is a holy place, for the Holy Ghost has made it his temple. Every evil, therefore, of thought, and word, and deed, profanes a thing set apart to God's special service; profanes a place where God continually dwells. Every lust, every evil and unkind passion, is, therefore, a sacrilege." And, then, if he turns to the temptations of the world, and casts the eye of faith towards that future and unseen

recompense which is promised him, he bethinks him at what price it was purchased for him, and by what infinite love it was given; he feels, on the one hand, how worthless must be his own efforts to earn that which only the blood of the Son of God could buy; yet, with what zealous hope he may labour, sure that God is mightily working in him, giving him an earnest will, and strengthening him to do steadily, what he has willed sincerely.

This, then, is a faith that overcometh the world; for it is a faith that looks to an eternal reward, and which is founded on such a display of God's love and holiness, that the Christian may well say, "I know in whom I have believed." Conceive any one of us, old or young, having this faith, and do we not feel sure that it must overcome the world? Do we not feel sure that all temptations must be powerless against him who is heartily persuaded of what God has done, and will do for him, who looks forward to the kingdom of heaven, and knows and feels by whose blood it has been thrown open to him? Do we not see clearly, and do not our own hearts tell us, that if temptations are too strong for us, it is because our faith is weak? If the present pleasure beguiles us, is it not because the future blessing is one of which we do not feel quite sure? Is it not because the love of Christ, in dying for us, is rather a sound familiar to our

ears, than a reality, thoroughly impressed on our hearts and minds? Have you not, in fact, so felt it to be, even while I have been now addressing you? The sounds, the words, which I have been using, are so familiar to your ears, that they seem uninteresting from their very triteness. Your attention would be ten times more aroused by the commonest story which I could tell you, about the commonest worldly interest; yet, while the words are thus so familiar, the reality of them is altogether strange to you. If your attention has followed what I have said, I know that in much of it I shall have been as one who beateth the air; that the love of God in Christ gives you really no distinct and lively idea: your hearts and minds do not take it in. Assuredly the faith which you find at once so uninteresting, and so hard to understand, cannot be the ruling principle of your lives: you cannot, in any sense, be walking by faith. And, therefore, I have thought that it might be well to say a few words in conclusion, as to the means of gaining this faith; to tell you how you may, with God's blessing, come to understand it and to love it, and to act upon it, just as naturally as we now act every day, from some motive of worldly pleasure or pain.

I dare say, that when I speak of the means of gaining this faith, you will know at once to what I am alluding; so impossible is it to say what you do not know already; as impossible, indeed, as it

appears to be to make you feel it as well as know it. The means are principally three—reading the Scripture, prayer, and a partaking of the Lord's supper. You see what it is that is wanted ; namely, to make notions wholly remote from your common life take their place in your minds as more powerful than the things of common life :—to make the future and the unseen prevail over what you see and hear now around you. I know, indeed, of one thing which would effect this in an instant. Let any of you be taken dangerously ill, let his prospects of earthly life be rendered less than uncertain, then he would soon think far more of the unseen world than of the world now around us. And it is certain, or at least all but certain, that some of you who now hear me will be thus reminded of another world—out of the number here assembled, it is certain that some will be cut off before they reach their prime. No one, who has left school ten years, will find that all who were his companions there are still alive : therefore, although taking you each separately, the probabilities are, that you will live on to the natural age of man ; yet, taking you altogether, it is more than a probability that you will not. But this is always one of those cases in which every one trusts that the chances will be in his own favour ; and this innate gambling spirit of human nature it is mostly vain to argue with. Your business is to gain for yourselves, with no

risk, but to your infinite and certain profit, that lively sense of unseen things, which sickness and sudden death may bring to you, when too late to save you. When I speak of Christ's love to you, those who know little of the New Testament feel that the words are to them hardly more than an empty sound: they have no distinct impression of what Christ was and is. But this impression may be gained by reading about him: it was one great end of his becoming man, and of his words and actions being so fully recorded, that we should be able to bring him before our minds as a real and living friend, that his character, his feelings—I had well nigh said his very person and manner—might be brought distinctly and vividly before us. And what a picture the history of Christ's life and death, as given in the Gospels, does really offer to us! It cannot be said that it is hard or uninteresting; on the contrary, the story of his betrayal and crucifixion, in particular, is so full of the deepest interest, that I am sure if it were not so connected with thoughts of God, from which our inborn sense of sin makes us instinctively shrink, it would be read for the mere pleasure of the story. So, again, with the account of the raising of Lazarus, and of many other of our Lord's miracles; and the same may be said of the perfect beauty of many of his parables and other discourses. By reading these often, we get clear and lively notions of our Saviour's cha-

character; we learn unavoidably to love it. Then it is, I think, that the facts of his resurrection and ascension, and of his divine nature, come upon us with such exceeding comfort. If we have become deeply interested in any other character of ancient days, yet we feel, that after all, it is an interest about a thing that is past;—the virtues which we admire, the character which we love, have no longer any existence with respect to ourselves. In whatever state the dead are reserved till the day of the general resurrection, the veil is purposely drawn over their condition, that we might not seek to hold too close communion with them. But when from a study of Christ's life in the flesh we have learnt to admire and to love him, then how delightful is the recollection, that over him death has had no power—that at this very moment he lives in the same human nature, the very self-same Jesus, in all tenderness, in all watchful care of his disciples, in all human affections and divine excellencies, as when he parted from his disciples at Bethany, and a cloud received him out of their sight. He was dead, but he liveth for evermore, and the Son of Man is sitting at the right hand of God till he shall come to earth once more to complete the number of his redeemed. Say not, then, nor think, nor feel, that Christ *was* merciful, that he *was* all kindness and all wisdom, that he *did* many mighty works, and had the Spirit of his Father given him without

measure; but say,—and you will say truly,—and think, and feel, that he *is* merciful, that he *is* all kindness and all wisdom, that he *does* mighty works every day,—for all power is given to him in heaven and in earth:—that he *has* the Spirit of his Father, and daily distributes of it to his disciples, that so we may all receive of his fulness. These are the feelings which we may gain from the New Testament. Faith will come by *reading*, as of old time it came by *hearing*; and when we have thus become familiar with Christ, have learned to love him, and to know that he not only *was*, but *is now*, a living object of our love, the prospect of being with him for ever will not seem like a vague promise of we know not what, but a real substantial pleasure, which we would not forfeit for all that the world can offer.

But I have been led away by my subject, and find that there is not time to pursue it further: I must reserve the other two means of acquiring Christian faith for consideration in another sermon. Only may God grant, that what I have hitherto said, may lead some of you, at least, to acquire a greater familiarity with the words and deeds of Christ; that your own experience might tell you whether I have over-valued the advantages of knowing them and loving them.

SERMON III.

JOHN vi. 58.

This is the bread which came down from heaven : not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead : he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

I MENTIONED in my last sermon, that there were three ordinary means of acquiring that faith which is so necessary to us, and of which we all of us have too little a portion. These three means were, reading the Scriptures, prayer, and the partaking of the Lord's supper. Of the first of these I spoke last Sunday. I mentioned how, by reading the story of Christ's life and death in particular, we should bring the thought of him home to our minds as something of a reality ; and, when we had learnt to fancy and to love him as he was on earth, that then it was a comfort to think, that such as he had been on earth, such he now is at the right hand of God, with almighty power and infinite love ; and I earnestly recommended the making ourselves familiar with the words and deeds of Christ, as a first and most important step

towards believing in him and loving him. Still it is but too certain, by every day's experience, that the reading of the Scriptures of itself is not sufficient; that although faith may come at first by reading, yet it needs something else to sustain it; in short, that it is very possible to know the Scriptures thoroughly, and yet not to have that faith which overcometh the world. Nay, I may go further: it is possible not only to know the Scriptures, but heartily to admire them; not only to be familiar with Christ's words and actions, but to feel a great delight in and love for them; and yet still not to have that saving, that victorious faith, of which St. John speaks in the words of my last Sunday's text. We cannot doubt Peter's familiar knowledge of his Lord, nor yet his lively recollection of his words, nor his warm affection for his person; yet with all this, what is it that Christ said to him just before he was betrayed to be crucified?—"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." What faith he had already was not sufficient to withstand the assaults of his enemy; he was overcome, even to the denying of his Lord; yet his faith, though weak, though far from overcoming the world, still, through Christ's

prayer, was upheld from failing utterly. He recovered from his fall, and received a diviner strength; and when converted, he did indeed strengthen his brethren; and not only his brethren who then were, but by his epistles, preserved for our instruction, he strengthens us also, and will continue to strengthen our children after us, even unto the end of the world.

Let us take then ourselves, (and to how many in the world is the case applicable,) as being such as Peter was when our Lord said these words to him. I do not mean to suppose our love to Christ to be half so warm as his was; much rather I believe may we sympathise with the wish of one of the best and wisest men of the fifteenth century, (Wessel of Groningen,) "that we had so much love to Christ in these quiet times as Peter had, even when he cursed and swore, and denied his master." But I mean the likeness to extend thus far; that we, like Peter, may have become familiar with our Lord's words and life, and may really have conceived a sincere admiration and love for them. Then it is that we need Christ's prayer for us, that our faith fail not; then it is that Satan will sift us as wheat, will do with us whatever he will, unless Christ's prayer join with our prayer, and Christ's spirit enter into our spirits, to become our bread of life.

"This is the bread which came down from

heaven : not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead : he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." Easy, most easy, is it to admire and love what is beautiful, and wise, and pure, and holy ; nay, it is even unnatural and monstrous not to admire it. But there is something more wanted than this, before we shall copy as well as admire ; and in this is the great point of all. It is not enough that we love the character of Christ ; who can help loving it ? It must be something of a closer and more personal feeling, if I may so speak, that will make him become to us the bread of life ; and this feeling will only be gained by prayer. By prayer we speak to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and we speak to him as needing his help and mercy. By prayer we express our sense of the reality of what we have read in the Scriptures ; we say, in fact, " Give to me, Lord, my own particular portion in the blessings which the Scripture speaks of. I love what I read of Christ ; but I am so unlike him, that he cannot love me. I love his character ; but other feelings often come in much stronger than his love, so that I cannot be said to live in the love of him. What I want, thou, Lord, seest, and thou wilt give it me also ; for though I have, as yet, no personal experience in these matters, yet I know that the Scripture says we shall be heard if we pray to thee, and that thou

wilt give thy Holy Spirit to them that ask it.” It is an awful moment, a turning point often in our character for all eternity, when we first begin, in some such manner as this, to enter into a real communion with God; when our prayers first become,—I do not say sincere, for I should be very sorry to think that they had not been, in many cases, sincere, even from earliest childhood,—but when they first proceed out of an awakened heart, which feels more deeply what itself is, and what is God. It is astonishing how this sort of earnest prayer opens our eyes daily more and more, and strengthens our faith. A natural part of such prayer is confession: we cannot but truly feel our unworthiness when we bring the most high and holy God present, in a manner, before us. We know then—we cannot help knowing—that we are naked. This calls up before our minds our particular and besetting sins; those disguises of our real character, which self-love is so apt to throw over it, are all torn to pieces then; we see ourselves nearly in the same light as a fair enemy would see us. And this alone, what a mighty point is it to gain! How many of us (and this is the truer, in proportion as we are younger) are kept from day to day, without ever seeing ourselves truly as we are! We think of our faults, only to deny or to excuse them; we dwell with pleasure on our good points,

and the rest we are glad to pass over. But in prayer, and when kneeling, really with a sincere heart, before Him to whom all hearts are open, his Spirit, if I may so speak, becomes our own; and we are all open and manifest before our own eyes, as before his. Then we turn to him to save us from this evil which we have discovered: "Lord, forgive me; Lord, help me to strive against my selfishness, my indolence, my pride, my unkindness, my carelessness, my love of pleasure, my lust, my covetousness, my ungodliness!"

Each soul who now hears me, if he could but put himself for an instant into this state when he is sincerely praying, could tell at once,—his heart, whilst I have been naming these several sins, would answer at once to the touch of that or those particular ones to which he is himself in bondage, "Lord, help me to strive against it; for Jesus Christ's sake, save me from it!" They are but a few words; but how wholesome to the soul when said, as they are said in such prayer, with earnest sincerity! Our attention is drawn just to those very parts in ourselves which most need it: at every prayer, the attention is renewed. We cannot help thinking, when we ask God in the evening to strengthen us against such and such a sin, whether we have committed it since we uttered the same prayer in the morning. If we have not, we are encouraged; if we have, we are justly ashamed;

and our prayer is the more earnest, that the next day we may be more watchful. Say that we fall again, (for infinite is our frailty,) that our sense of shame is deeper, our fear for the future just so great as to give the enemy of our souls an opportunity of turning it into desperate carelessness: "It is a vain labour to try to mend." Then our familiarity with the Scripture comes in-time to tell us, "that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins;" and to encourage us to renewed efforts, by assuring us "that he who cometh to Christ, Christ will in no wise cast out."

The same knowledge of the Scripture brings rapidly before our minds all the promises which we most need. It reminds us that we must be earnest in prayer, and not faint; that the kingdom of God is like the seed, which grew up in its appointed season, though it showed no signs of life at once; that he who shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. All these, and many other such texts, we now lay hold of with a personal interest. We now feel their value. The words of Christ, in this our daily struggle with our sins, are now, indeed, becoming to us our bread of life. While I repeat the words, those who have attended to what I have been saying will feel their true import; they will feel that, in such circum-

stances, they would go to Christ's life and words, and find in them a real effectual support to their souls, just as they have found the cheering and strengthening effect of food to their bodies, when engaged in any great and fatiguing exercise of body or mind—That, amidst these prayers, thus repeated, a wonderful change is effected within us; that our dispositions are greatly softened and sweetened; that our views of life and death become different; our interest in earthly things less engrossing; our selfishness generally less intense; all this is a matter of actual experience; of most blessed experience to those who can confirm it from within themselves: but of recorded experience also in the lives of Christians, such as we may either have known them ourselves, or may have read of them. And that this change, so real and so visible, is the work of the Holy Spirit of God,—of the manner of which we can see and know nothing, but whose effects both we and all the world can witness,—this we learn from the Scriptures; and it forms one of the great and most consoling truths of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Unquestionably, where this change is wrought, faith overcometh the world. The good things which God has prepared for them that love him; his love to us in Christ Jesus; the abiding influence of his Spirit; all these are things which our prayers have

made quite familiar, not to our ears only, but also to our hearts: they are things which have become the great interest of our lives, and we live in the daily consciousness of their reality.

But what if all these blessed effects do not follow;—what if our faith is still weak, and the world is not overcome;—that is, if the temptations of the world are still too much for us, and earthly hopes, and fears, and affections, still reign within our bosoms with far greater sway than the love of God? What shall we say to this? Is God's promise not sure? Is our labour all in vain? Or is it an empty dream that the Holy Spirit of God will ever deign to abide with the corrupt spirit of man? Shall we be careless or desperate, or rush to that most deadly snare of all, and say that we are fated to be as we are, and we cannot help it? All these are questions which arise from not enough bracing our minds to the belief of this great truth, that our struggle with evil must last to the very latest hour of our continuance in the body. Who told us that our victory would be won with less than half a life's labour; that our first efforts would be successful; and that we should be partakers of the rest that remaineth for the people of God, ere yet the sun had begun to slope from his meridian—ere the first shades of evening had arisen around us? We must learn another and a harder lesson, or else indeed we shall

lose the victory for ever. Is our faith still weak?—let us take heed that our prayers have not been less frequent or less zealous. Is the world still too much for us?—let us take heed that we have not thrown away some portion of our defence; that we have not been imprudent, to say the least of it; that we have not used the world even so as to abuse it; that we have not let the weeds and the thorns of earthly riches, pleasures, and honours, grow too unchecked and rankly. Let us measure our years, if we are young or in the vigour of manhood, at once for encouragement and for warning: if we see how little progress we have hitherto made, let us take heed lest we should feel the same when all our threescore years and ten are over; for the despair that would be most sinful now will be too just and too certain then. And let us know, that if we indulge the spirit of carelessness now, this despair will come,—our years will pass away unnoted, till gone for ever. But if our hearts are only unreasonably fearful, if we expected to conquer sin with too little effort, think of the portion of our lives that yet remains, think to what precious purposes it may be applied, and that he were but a foolish and faint-hearted traveller who expected to reach the end of his journey before half his day was over.

SERMON IV.

ACTS ii. 42.

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

IN speaking of Christian faith, I mentioned that there were three principal means of acquiring it: namely, reading the Scriptures, prayer, and a partaking of the Lord's supper. I have spoken of the two first of these, and I now propose to speak of the third; to which I may the better ask for your attention, as the communion is so soon to be here administered. Would that you might feel that communion to be as great a blessing as it really is; that you might, like the first Christians spoken of in the text, continue "stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

"The breaking of bread," here spoken of, was the Lord's supper, which is often mentioned under this name in different parts of the New Testament. It appears to have been celebrated as a real supper, as a sort of Christian feast; which we

may perceive from St. Paul's language to the Corinthians, where he charges them with profaning it, by not only making it like a common feast, but dishonouring it by actual riot and intemperance, such as would be sinful even at the commonest feast. But it is clear, from the very faults into which the early Christians fell with respect to the Lord's supper, that they were in the habit of celebrating it very often; and though in some cases, as at Corinth, it was celebrated very unworthily, yet we must not suppose that this was so always. Those Philippians and Thessalonians, of whom St. Paul speaks so highly, were likely to receive the communion of the Lord's supper not less often than the Corinthians; but in a very different manner, and with very different effects. To them, as to the first disciples at Jerusalem, mentioned in my text, it was a true remembrance of Christ's death; the bread which they brake, the cup which they drank, were a true partaking of Christ's body and blood. To them, in short, the communion was a powerful means of grace, and helped, under God's blessing, to increase their faith.

May it be so to us also, and it will be, if the fault is not our own. It will be a *means of grace*: I beg attention to the words; for this is a point very necessary to be understood, in order to avoid a superstition as foolish as it is mischievous. "It

is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing :” that is, it is not the consecrated bread and wine that have any virtue in themselves, for that would be to make them like a charm; but it is the state of mind which the preparation for and partaking in this ordinance implies, and is so well fitted to produce, which is so highly to be desired, and which tends to strengthen and confirm our faith. When, therefore, persons who never or very seldom receive the communion in health, are anxious to partake of it before they die, I am afraid that this desire is very often a mere deceiving superstition. They do not go to it as a means of grace; but as a means of gaining them pardon without grace,—as a means by which they may be saved without having in their lives heartily turned to God. And this is to make the communion a gross superstition; it is in fact to regard it as if it were a charm. In life and health it will assuredly make us better, if we habitually attend it; but who will dare to say that it can make us better on our death-beds, when we have neither the time nor the power of mind to complete so mighty a work as that of repentance, or a change of heart and desires from evil to good? The rain and the sunshine are the appointed means by which the fruits of the earth are ripened; but, in order to do their work, they must be sent in their proper season. They will make the seed spring up, they will encourage

its growth, and ripen it for the harvest: but of what use are they where the seed has never been sown at all, or where the soil has been so light or so foul that it has never been able to spring up, or to reach its full growth? Even so, the communion of the Lord's supper is as useless as the rain and sunshine upon the desert or the sea, where there are no good principles within us which it may strengthen and increase, or where the time is so short that its power can never sufficiently develop itself.

But this is not the case with you: with you it is yet the spring time, not yet too late for the rain and warmth of heaven to produce on the seed their full effect. You have yet the opportunity of using the means of grace to your great benefit, if you will but choose to avail yourselves of them. Begin now the habit of "continuing stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Begin it, if it be still to be begun: go on with it, if you have been happy enough to have already entered upon it. Do I call the hard and the careless among you to come next Sunday to the Lord's table, and there with hearts at once ungodly and superstitious, at once unbelieving and foolishly believing, to receive a morsel of bread and a few drops of wine, which to them would be far less profitable than the commonest food on the commonest occasion of daily

life? God forbid! It were a deceit of the most cruel kind to call such persons: it were most wicked to encourage them to receive as wholesome and strengthening food what to them would be a fatal poison. For, undoubtedly, the heart is not improved but injured by acts of superstition; the holiest things cannot be trifled with, but are a savour of death unto death, if they are not a savour of life unto life. And, therefore, I have not lately urged any of you in private to go to the communion, lest it might be possible that you should go out of human respects, rather than from a real desire to benefit yourselves. In fact, one feels on this point a great difficulty; one knows not how to urge you personally and separately to come, nor how to leave every thing unsaid, as if it mattered not in our estimate whether you came or no. But when I saw the comparatively small number that did attend the last time when the sacrament was administered, I felt sure that we ought not to be silent altogether, nor rest contented with such a state of things, without trying at least to mend it. I wished that another opportunity might be offered you, that if it were from accident in a manner that so many of you had then turned away from the Lord's table, and if since that time any circumstances had led your minds to a better state, that the means of grace might be placed within your reach at an early period, in order to confirm the

good impression. God alone can tell, when, and from what seemingly slight causes, feelings of repentance and faith may arise within us; and, therefore, that communion which is the best support of weakness, the best encouragement to our first endeavours after goodness, ought not to be long together withheld from your reach. It may be, that an impression which otherwise might have been soon worn out may be thus fixed for ever; it may be, that the spiritual food thus offered at the very hour of need may be indeed the bread of life. I call then, not upon the hard and utterly careless, but upon those, whoever and how many soever they are, who have at any rate received the good seed; who have sometimes thought of their souls; who have if it be no more than felt one honest wish that they had a share in Christ's redemption. Let that one wish be encouraged; and let him who has felt it resolve to come to the supper of Christ, that he may feel it again and for ever. And I earnestly call upon all those who hear me, into whose hearts such thoughts have entered, to come without regard to any such consideration as the place which they happen to hold in school. Entirely separate as the communion here is from all school regulations, and earnestly as we endeavour to abstain from any mere human and personal influence to persuade you to come, I have the more right to entreat you in your turn not to let such an

idle reason as that of being in a lower part of the school, prevent you from getting for your souls the help which they need. Nay, I would even say, what the Church fully authorizes me in saying, let not your not having been confirmed restrain you ; above all, take care that you do not make it an hypocritical excuse for putting off a little longer the duty of serious thought and self-examination. The Church says, that no one shall come to the communion until he be confirmed, or be ready or desirous to be confirmed. And, now in these days, when the opportunities of confirmation occur so seldom, and when, in the case of those who go early abroad, years may pass before they can receive it, we cannot be justified in wilfully depriving ourselves of a great means of grace, on such a reason as this. But we see many, far too many, who have been confirmed, and who have no such excuse to plead, still turning away, time after time, from the communion that is offered to them. I would not, and do not, reckon all these among the hard and utterly careless : that, indeed, were not less unreasonable, than it would be shocking to be obliged so to reckon them : but I do tell them that they are tempting God to make them hard and careless ; that they are playing with their own destruction : and that it is no light thing whether good thoughts are habitually neglected or stifled, or whether they be entertained and carefully

improved. It is no light thing that the impressions which you may sometimes receive in this place should vanish almost as soon as you go out of its doors. You may not be hard now,—none of you, I trust, are so ; but you will assuredly soon become so, if you go on neglecting the means of becoming otherwise. Of all deadly errors, I know of none so widely mischievous as that notion that we can repent at any time ; that it is always in our own power to be good. Undoubtedly we can always, with God's blessing, repent if we *will* ; but it is that very will to repent which we are surely destroying by a continual perseverance in unholiness. The appetite for good is as surely destroyed by long-continued habits of evil, as the appetite for our wholesome bodily food by a long continuance of bodily excesses.

Once more then I entreat all those who have had any serious thoughts and wishes to be good, to resolve to seize the means of grace now offered. Pray, that as Christ invites you to partake in the outward signs of his redemption, so you may be made one with him in heart and in spirit, and may be partakers of his redemption in deed. Remember that “ as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do shew the Lord's death till he come.” It brings to our minds the night just before Christ was betrayed, when he was assembled with his disciples, and holding to them that lan-

guage of counsel and of comfort which has been recorded by St. John from the thirteenth to the seventeenth chapters of his gospel, for our everlasting benefit. While we read those words, we feel as if, had we been with Christ's first disciples at that last supper, we could have resigned our whole souls without reserve into the care of our gracious Saviour. "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" — every affection, every desire, every hope and thought of our nature, let them be wholly thine, and purified by thy blessed Spirit. We feel as if indeed we could lay down our lives for his sake; we feel that we do then believe. But, my brethren, it is no vain superstition, it is no extravagant fancy, but the very simple truth, that if we, with contrite and humble hearts, do meet together at that holy table, there indeed is Christ in the midst of us; there is his Spirit shedding down upon us the peace that passeth all understanding, and enkindling within us a strength of holy resolutions, and an entireness of resignation to the will of God, such as we might have felt at that last supper, when our Lord was yet amongst us in the body. Not manifest indeed to the world, not manifest to any who approach his table with careless hearts; Judas sat with him and saw him with his bodily eyes, and ate of the bread and drank of the cup; but Christ's Spirit was not manifest to him; and it is the Spirit alone that

quickeneth. Even so, his bodily presence would profit us nothing: his Spirit is as truly with his faithful disciples now, when they eat and drink the bread and the wine in remembrance of him, as it was with his eleven faithful disciples, whom he then pronounced to be clean. Not clean indeed from all imperfection, not saved from all future sin and error, nor must we expect to be so; but strengthened to become better than they had been: not provided with an entire security against evil, but gifted with a more willing heart, and a firmer faith, to strive against it.

SERMON V.

(PREACHED ON ASH-WEDNESDAY.)

1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 11.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child : but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

THESE words contain the reason why so many of the sermons delivered from the pulpit in our own times, and our own country, produce so little effect upon their hearers. They are the address of a man who speaks and thinks in one way, to persons who speak and think in another. It is only by experience that we find what strong barriers are raised by age, by education, by manners of living, between one class of men and another ; so that what are the most natural and familiar thoughts to one set of persons, are to another strange and unnatural, and quite above their understanding. But the words of the apostle, although they will suit a great many other cases, are more particularly suited to ours, who are now here assembled : “ When I was a child, I thought, spake,

and understood as a child ; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” And so it is daily found to be : we not only put them away, but forget them ; insomuch that it is sometimes as hard for a man to put himself again into the place of a boy, and to remember what he once was, as it is for a boy to imagine what he will be when he becomes a man, of which he has hitherto had no experience at all. Our Lord himself seems, in one place, to speak of this particular difficulty which his ministers would meet with ; the difficulty of making themselves understood by their hearers. “ Every scribe,” he says, “ who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old :” that is, as the people whom he will speak to are so different, he must be furnished with something to say to all of them ; with things new and old ; with things plain and things learned ; with things solemn and things familiar ; with things of heaven and things of earth. However good what he says may be of itself, it is worth nothing for practice, if it be not also suited to the particular understandings and feelings of those he is speaking to. It is not enough to speak of sin in general, and holiness in general, of God and Christ, of death and judgment. Something more clear and distinct is wanted ; or else we do but fill the ears of our

hearers with empty words, rather than bring home to their minds any truths that will do them good. You know very well that your faults are not those which you read of most in books; for books are written by men, and, in general, are intended to be read by men; they speak, therefore, mostly of the sins and temptations of manhood—of covetousness, ambition, injustice, pride, and other older vices,—with which you feel that you have as yet but small concern. Besides, the pulpit is a solemn and sacred place; whereas the matters with which you are daily engaged are so common and so humble, that it seems like a want of reverence to speak of them in a sermon plainly by their names. And yet, if we do not speak of them plainly by their names, half of what we say will be lost in the air. I purpose, then, with God's help, now and, perhaps, at some future times also, during this season of Lent which is now begun, to say something to you all about your own particular state and dangers; nor shall I care how plain and familiar is the language I use, as it is my wish to speak in such a manner that the youngest boy amongst you may understand, if he chooses to listen and to attend.

It is now a little more than a week ago, since there was read in this chapel the story of Adam eating the forbidden fruit, and being on that account driven out of paradise, and made liable

to death. This story tells us how the first man that ever lived became a sinner: and we know, if we look into our own hearts with any care and sincerity, that we shall find enough that is sinful in ourselves. That this is so generally,—that bad, if left to itself, is too strong for good, and that the greatest number are apt to follow the bad rather than the good,—men learn every year of their lives more fully, by their experience of the world around them; but you too have had some experience of it already. Several of you are only just come to this place; some of you were never at any school at all till you came here. Some of you, at least, and I hope very many, have had the blessing of good parents at home; you have been taught to hear of God and of Christ, to say your prayers, and to remember that wherever you are, and whatever you are doing, God ever sees you. You have seen in your own house nothing base, nothing cruel, nothing ill-natured, and especially, nothing false. You thought a lie was one of the most hateful things in the world; and that to give up to your brothers and sisters, and to please your parents, was a great deal better than to be always quarrelling and envying, and to think of pleasing no one but yourselves. I hope and believe that many of you, before you came to school, were thus taught, and that the teaching was not in vain; that you not only heard of what was good, but, on

the whole, practised it. But how is it with you now? I am afraid that I dare not ask those who have been here so much as one half year or more: but even if I were to ask those who have not yet been here so much as one month, what sort of an answer could you give, if you answered truly? Do you think of God *now*? Do you remember that he ever, and in every place, sees what you are doing? Do you say your prayers to him? Do you still think that lying, and all those shuffling, dishonest excuses, which are as bad as lying, are base, and contemptible, and wicked?—or have you heard these things so often from others, even if you yourselves have not been guilty of them, that you think there cannot be any great harm in them? Do you still love to be kind to your companions, never teasing or ill-treating them, and never being ill-natured and out of temper with them?—or have you already been accustomed to the devilish pleasure of giving pain to others: and whilst you are yourselves teased and ill used by some who are stronger than you, do you repeat the very same conduct to those who are weaker than you? Are you still anxious to please your parents; and, in saying your lessons, do you still retain the natural thought of a well-bred and noble disposition, that you would like to say them as well as you can, and to please those who teach you?—or have you

already learnt the first lesson in the devil's school, to laugh at what is good, and generous, and high-principled, and to be ashamed of doing your duty? Now if you have been wholly or in part corrupted in these points, within one short month, so that the good learnt in ten or twelve years has been overthrown in less than thirty days; —and if this has happened not to one or two only, who might happen to be weak, and easily led into evil, but, more or less, to all of you, and, in a greater degree, generally speaking, to those who have been here for a longer period; if, in short, you all find that you would be afraid to speak and act just as you ought to do, because you would be laughed at and disliked if you did; —then you have already had some experience of the truth of what the Bible tells us, that man's nature is corrupt and bad; and you can understand somewhat of the meaning of those texts which speak of the world as being opposed to God, and that its friendship is enmity with God. It shows you plainly, how strong must be our evil dispositions, when you see them, in so short a time, getting the better of those that have had ten or twelve years to ripen; it shows you, too, how much the world is opposed to God; that is, the opinions and practices of a number of persons, living together in one society, —because you see a number of boys, who, while

living at home, or by themselves, might go on very well, and think and act very rightly, yet, as soon as they mix with one another, and form one large body, the opinions and influence of that body shall be bad. Every boy brings some good with him, at least, from home, as well as some evil; and yet you see how very much more catching the evil is than the good, or else you would make one another better by mixing together; and if any single boy did anything wrong, it would be condemned by the general opinion of all the school, just as some wrong things, such as stealing money, for example, are condemned at present. You have learnt, then, or at least, you have had the experience, and may have learnt, if you chose, how easily you are tempted to do wrong, and how apt the world is to tempt you: for, as I said before, the society in which we live is the world; and, therefore, school is the world to you, just as our town and neighbourhood and acquaintance, and all those who hear or know anything about us, are the world to each of us in after life. And if you find, and sometimes, perhaps, feel sorry within yourselves, that it is so hard to be good; that you are so easily tempted to evil, and that the world about you is so apt to tempt you;—and yet, although you are thus sorry not to be better, you still are, in fact, no better;—then you are under what

St. Paul calls the service and bondage of sin ; that is, your lives are sinful, whether you like it or no ; and being sinful, lead you to dislike God, and to fear him, without the fear doing you any good, and thus make you liable to his heavy judgments. And it was a man in this state whom St. Paul makes justly to cry out, from a strong feeling of his misery, “ O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ”

SERMON VI.

JOHN iii. 12.

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

IN what I said to you on Wednesday from this place, I tried to bring clearly before your minds the meaning of those expressions which you will meet with in the Bible, and in other religious books,—that our nature is corrupt, and that we are all inclined to sin much more than to goodness. I tried to show you how you had already had experience of this, by finding how much easier it is to lose good habits than to gain them; to unlearn your duty than to learn it. I said, too, that you ought not at all to content yourselves with merely being sorry for not being better; but that you should recollect how St. Paul speaks of such a state as being a bondage, as being a wretched captivity, in which sin had bound him fast to his destruction,

and would have kept him a prisoner for ever, in spite of all his wishing, now and then, that he were better, had he not been delivered through Jesus Christ. And I said in conclusion, that if you could bring yourselves really to feel this, then you were ripe for the great message of God which is called the Gospel; namely, the message in which he tells us that he has sent his Son into the world, that the world through him might be saved. I said, that you were ripe for the great message of God, if you could bring yourselves really to feel this; but I know, full well, how much there is in this *if*; no less indeed, to speak shortly, than the whole work of your salvation. To say, "If you can bring yourselves really to feel your sin and danger," is to say, "If your hearts can be changed, by the Spirit of God, from stony, or shallow, or choked up with weeds and briars, to that soft, and strong, and clean soil, in which the seed of eternal life will bring forth fruit an hundredfold." Nothing, indeed, can be more easy than to tell you of the salvation offered by Christ Jesus;—that he died for us, and rose again; and that, having overcome the sharpness of death, he has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. I could tell you this, as you have often heard it before; and the words would seem so old and familiar to your ears, that you could hardly fix your attention on them; while the thing itself would be so strange and foreign to all your feelings

and notions, that you would not bring it home to your hearts and lives. Our Lord had been speaking to Nicodemus about his sinful nature, and the necessity of its being changed; and even then Nicodemus did not enter into his meaning. Much less, then, could he enter into the great doctrine of salvation through Christ; he could not attend to what was said of the means of curing him, if he did not feel that he was sick. And, therefore, Christ well said to him, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"

This, then, is the difficulty—how to make you, particularly the youngest among you, understand and enter into the truths of the Gospel. It is not that they are, properly speaking, hard to be understood; it is not, like some hard matter of science, or some very difficult passage in a book, which you really are not old enough to understand, if you were to try ever so earnestly. The words in which religious truths are taught are as plain to you as to me. You know what is meant by death, and heaven, and hell, and repentance, and salvation, when you hear them spoken of: but the truth is, you do not care to think about them, because you have no interest about them. Generally speaking, we can understand and do well what we are fond of; however dull we may be about things that we dislike. You know how common it is to see a boy

very dull about his lessons, yet very quick and active in other things. Now he is dull about his lessons, because he does not like them; because his mind is, as it were, asleep to them, and wakes up for things that he likes better. Real dulness of understanding shows itself in a very different way, and is, in comparison, very uncommon. If a boy is heavy and slow at all times,—dull at his plays as well as at his work, unable to amuse himself, and seeming to enjoy nothing but the lowest pleasures of all, eating, drinking, and sleeping,—then, indeed, we may say that the fault is, in a great measure, in his understanding—that he wants the power as well as the will. But in the things of religion, it is the will that we all want, and not the power; it is the appetite for our spiritual food, and nothing else, that is required; it is our hearts that are sick and weak, rather than our understandings. And what is it by which we can make them strong? What is it, indeed, and who can give it us? No friend, no teacher, no minister of the Gospel; no parent, however watchful, however tenderly affectionate. No man can deliver his brother, no friend his friend, no parent his child. All that the utmost care and kindness of man, or even of angel, could do in our behalf, is to point out the spring of the water of life: but to drink it depends upon yourselves only; and to desire to drink it depends on the gift of the Spirit of God.

If we are sick and weak, and our appetite for our food is gone, it is of no use to tell us to eat, or to put food before us; we must first get the appetite, and then we shall eat naturally and healthfully. And we know that there are means by which our appetite, when lost, may be regained. If we are sick and weak, it does not follow that we shall never be well and strong, if we use those means which common sense, and the experience of others, have told us to be useful. So also there are means by which the appetite of our souls may be recovered; there is a way by which they may become well and strong; and common sense, and the experience of all good men, and the word of God himself, has declared to us what these means are. You all know that I speak of the habit of prayer: you want the will to come to Christ; you want to love good more strongly than you now love it; you want to love it so much as never to love any sin better. But you want what neither others nor yourselves, by yourselves, can give you. “No man can come unto God, unless God will draw him.” You may say, ‘Perhaps he will not draw me; and, therefore, I never shall be able to come to him.’ Nay, but hear his own promise, as it was read to you this very morning in this place:—“No father will give his son a stone when he asks for bread; and if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children,”

—if you know, by experience, how kind are your earthly parents, how much they would give up for your good, how carefully they would do all in their power to benefit you,—“how much more shall your Father that is in heaven give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

Be assured that no request which you can make to the kindest of earthly fathers will ever be so sure to be readily granted, as the request which you may make to your heavenly Father, that he will teach you to love him. Pray to him constantly for his help to open your eyes, and soften your hearts; and be sure that such prayers will not be in vain. Pray to him to show you what he thinks of the evil that you are every day committing, and to make you think of it in the same manner; and depend upon it, that you will judge of it, ere long, very differently from what you now do. And this is in your own power. You can, if you choose, bend your knees, and utter words to God; you can speak to him in your hearts at certain seasons, whether you have opportunity to bend your knees or no. You can make a point of so speaking to him every day; of forcing yourselves to do it, if you cannot do it willingly: and then if you go on in this way, merely resolving and practising to speak to God,—I care not in how few words, so that they are the words of your own hearts,—asking him to be merciful to you, and to

make you his own true children,—be assured that the will and the love of his service will very soon be given to your prayers, and you will be brought, by the Holy Spirit, to know and to love the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.

SERMON VII.

2 KINGS ii. 24.

*There came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare
forty and two children of them.*

I SAID, some time since, that as the Bible was written chiefly for grown-up persons, and the faults of grown-up persons are different from those of boys, so many things that are said in the Bible may seem not directly to concern you. And, in particular, what is difficult for all to form to themselves any full notion of, is, in the case of the young, still harder to enter into fully : I mean, the great consequence of what we do ;—the very great rewards that will follow it, if good ; and the equally great punishments which it will bring upon us, if bad. This, I say, is hard for every one to conceive : and it is well said, that the very first temptation ever offered to men, took advantage of this common feeling : “ The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.” But it is still harder for you to fancy that your conduct can be either

so immensely rewarded, or so heavily punished, because it seems to relate to things of such little consequence. You may hear grown-up people talk afterwards, in a laughing manner, of the faults which they committed at school,—of their idleness, and of the various acts of mischief, and worse than mischief, which they committed. They speak of their school faults as of things which, indeed, it was very proper for the master to punish, when he found them out; but which, if he did not find them out, were never in danger of being punished by any one else. And when boys hear older people speak in this manner of their own past conduct, it naturally makes them think that it does not really matter much whether they behave well or ill at school, excepting always in certain points which they think are dishonourable; and that they are just as likely to be respectable and amiable men hereafter, if they are idle and careless now, as if they were ever so attentive and industrious.

Now, I would beg those who think so to attend a little to the story in the text:—As Elisha, the prophet, was going up to Bethel, “there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said to him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.” Now,

some say that the word, which is here translated, “little children,” means rather “boys, or young men;” but, however this be, it is certain, (and that is the point to which I want to bring you,) that the persons thus heavily punished were persons not grown up to manhood; they had all the excuse that youth could give them. And the offence too was probably one which we should call rather carelessness and idle mischief, than deliberate wickedness. They insulted Elisha, just as I am afraid that persons, with any thing in their appearance at all strange or remarkable, are sometimes insulted now. It was Elisha’s baldness which they laughed at, in the very spirit of idle boys, at all times, and in all countries. They laughed at him too as a prophet; just in the way that congregations of Methodists, for example, have been sometimes laughed at and disturbed among us, and their singing and preaching made a jest of. But for this offence, we are told that the prophet cursed them in the name of the Lord, and that “there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.” The point for you to observe is, that God is angry with the faults of young persons as with those of grown-up men, and that he punishes them as heavily. Of course, the rest of the story is not applicable: God’s punishments are not now punishments upon our bodies in this life, but punishments upon our immortal bodies after

the resurrection, when we shall all be called before the judgment-seat of Christ. And a man, who, being thus insulted, were to curse those who were insulting him, and to wish for God's judgments upon them, would certainly now be a great deal worse than the boys who had provoked him. But that is not our concern; nor are we considering the conduct of Elisha, but the punishment inflicted by God upon those who had offended him, and which is recorded in the Scriptures for our example.

I take this story, then, as teaching us what I think we very much need to be taught, namely, that the faults of our youth, and those which are most natural to us at that age, are not considered by God as trifling, but are punished by him after the same measure as the sins of men. And it is very easy to explain why men should often speak of them as trifling, and look back upon their own conduct at school with little or no concern. The reason is, because they measure the guilt of faults by the harm which they do in this world, and not by the harm which they do in unfitting us for the kingdom of God, by making us unlike God and Christ. Now it is very certain that the faults of boys do not do any very great harm in the world: when boys ill treat one another, it is very seldom that the injury is so serious as to be felt in after life; when they lie, the consequence of their lie is, perhaps, no more than to save themselves from

punishment; when they are extravagant and run in debt, it is very often only to the amount of a few shillings, which it does not seriously inconvenience their friends to pay. Nay, when they are idle, it very often happens that their worldly interest in after life does not seriously suffer from it. Men then, feeling that their own faults in manhood produce so much more serious consequences,—that extravagance and idleness are then absolute ruin to many others besides themselves,—that the indulgence of violent and cruel passions then may absolutely lead to murder, and that falsehood, or theft, would at once cause them to be driven out of society,—comparing, I say, these serious worldly consequences of the faults of manhood, with the very light worldly consequences of the faults of boyhood, and not considering, in either case, that the real evil of every fault is its offence in the sight of God, its making us more unlike his image, and more like the image of the devil, and, therefore, more unfit for the company of God, and more fit for the company of devils,—they are apt to laugh at what they call the mere tricks and idlenesses of their youth, and thus to encourage those young persons who hear them, to go on without scruple in the very same track of carelessness.

But what is it, then, that Jesus Christ means, when he tells us, that “he who is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much,” and, “that if we

have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to our trust the true riches?" He means, that when we talk of the consequences of our actions, we forget, that as in one point of view the consequences of the greatest crimes that the most powerful tyrant ever committed, are as the least thing in the sight of God, so, in another, the consequences of the common school faults of the youngest boy are infinitely great. The desolation of mighty kingdoms, the ruin of thousands of families, blood, and fire, and murder, and famine, and pestilence, which follow so often in the train of war,—these are evils which seem to us so monstrous, that the man, who, for his own selfish pride and ambition, brings them upon mankind, appears, indeed, deserving of God's heaviest judgments:—for we make God to see with our eyes, and to view that as important in itself which is important to us. But what, if we merely look up to the sky on any starlight night, and fix our eyes upon some one of the smallest stars that are there shining in their brightness? That little star, that little bright point in infinite space, is, probably, a sun as large and as powerful as ours, and gives light and heat not to one, but to several worlds like this in which we live, each of them filled, it may be, with reasonable beings, with hopes and fears, and pains and pleasures, as important to them as ours to us. Now, if this star, this little

star in our eyes,—but, in truth, this sun of more than one world like ours,—if this star, with all its worlds, were to perish in an instant, how infinitely small should we regard the loss of it! What a less than an atom, in our estimate, would be the happiness or the misery of all the beings who would thus be destroyed in an instant! So, too, to all the beings of other worlds, may the happiness and misery of mankind, and all the evils which the worst tyranny ever inflicted, seem as infinitely trifling; far, far more so, than we can regard the slightest fault, or the lightest suffering of the youngest boy. But God judges differently: that is to him important, and that he wills his creatures to regard as important, which is an offence against his laws, a departure from his likeness. And of this, even of sin, he has willed the consequences to be infinite; not confined to the happiness or misery of a few years, but of all eternity. So then, if you displease God, which you know you do by every fault, the evil of your conduct is infinite, and its consequences are infinite; not doing injury here, but doing injury far greater—injury to your immortal souls, ruin to your immortal happiness. “He that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.” Here is the reason given why the faults of your boyhood are so serious, because they show a temper that does not love God, and a heart unrenewed by his Holy Spirit;—a temper and a

heart, which, as they follow in boyhood and youth the faults of youth, so in manhood will they follow the faults of manhood, not, perhaps, those which men regard as infamous, but the faults which God no less abhors; and having thus, in their state of trial, fitted themselves, not for more perfect good, but for greater ripeness in evil, their portion will be evil throughout eternity.

SERMON VIII.

MATT. xviii. 6.

Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

You see by the strong language which our Lord here uses, that the sin which he is threatening in these words is a very great one; and he goes on to repeat the threat in the verse following:—“Woe unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.” Some of you, I trust, will know already what the words mean, and will see directly what I am going to turn them to;—for it is a passage which I have often dwelt upon, as it is one which, while it is generally useful to all persons, strikes especially at one of the greatest sins of schools. But there are many, I dare say, who do not know what it means; and who have never thought, when they heard this solemn

threat read in the Church, that they were themselves some of the very persons concerned in it,—that they were daily “offending,” in the Scripture meaning of the word, some of Christ’s little ones. I could not indeed have chosen a text which came home more directly to your daily practice, than the one which I have just read: I could not have noticed any sin with which your consciences will tell you, the moment that our Lord’s words are explained to you, that you are more familiar. I proceed, therefore, to explain them; and will then apply them, in one or two common instances, to your life and daily habits. When our Lord speaks of offending one of these little ones who believe in him, I should first say that the word “offend,” in common speech, has a very different meaning from that in which the translators of the Bible have here used it. You know that our translation was made more than two hundred years ago; so that it is not wonderful that some words in the course of that time have changed their meanings. “Offend,” in the text, and in many other places in the New Testament, means “to tempt or lead another into sins;” so that by “offending one of these little ones,” our Lord does not mean “vexing them;” “making them angry,” or “ill using them;” but “tempting or leading them into evil,” or “throwing any hindrances in the way of their doing what

they ought to do." It is this that he calls so wicked, that it were better for us to die this moment than be guilty of it. But now, by "little ones," whom are we to understand? Jesus had just before taken a little child, and sat him in the midst, and told his disciples, that unless they were converted and became as little children, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven. And then he says, that "they must not mislead or tempt to evil one of these little ones who believe in him." Now, a very little child cannot believe in Christ, because he cannot understand much about him. And we know also, that it must be a sin to tempt any one to evil, whether they be really little children in age or no. But the more like children they are,—that is, the more ignorant and simple-minded, and ready to believe and to do what others tell them,—so much the more wicked it is to tell them wrong, or to hinder them from going right. It applies then to any one who is young in character, even though he should happen to be old in years; but it applies particularly to those who are at once young in years and young in character. It applies therefore particularly to those boys who are desirous of doing their duty, who have no great confidence in themselves, but are ready to be guided by others; who are shy and timid, and unable to stand against laughter or ill usage.

There are such in every school ; and it is the worst reproach of schools, and the most awful responsibility for all who are connected with them, to think, that so many of them are utterly lost in consequence of the temptations which they here meet with : they are “offended” in the Scripture sense of the word, that is, they are laughed or frightened out of their Saviour’s service, and taught very often, ere long, not only to deny their Lord themselves, but to join in “offending” others, who are now as innocent as they once were, and to draw them over to the worship and service of Satan, to which their own souls are already abandoned.

Now, then, you see what the text means, and you feel how it applies to you. You know that there are amongst you many boys who remember and wish to keep the lessons that they have received at home ; and you know also, how much it is the fashion of schools to teach just the contrary. And I will take two instances which will have come, I fear, often enough within the experience of you all. I mean the case of idleness, and the case of extravagance.

First, for Idleness. There are boys who have either never learnt, or have quite forgotten, all that may have been told them at home, of the duty of attending to their school-lessons. We know that there are boys who think all their lessons merely tiresome, and who are resolved never to take any more

trouble about them, than what they cannot possibly avoid. But being thus idle themselves, they cannot bear that others should be more attentive. We all know the terms of reproach and ridicule which are thrown out against a boy who works in earnest and upon principle. He is laughed at for taking unnecessary trouble, for being afraid of punishment, or for wishing to gain favour with his masters, and be thought by them to be better than other boys. Either of these reproaches is one which a boy finds it very hard to bear;—he does not like to be thought afraid, or plodding, or as wishing to court favour. He has not age or sense, or firmness enough to know and to answer, that the only fear of which he need be ashamed is the fear of his equals, the fear of those who are in no respect better than himself, and have therefore no sort of right to direct him. To be afraid then of other boys is, in a boy, the same sort of weakness as it is in a man to be afraid of other men: and as a man ought to be equally ashamed of fearing men and of not fearing God; so a boy ought to be ashamed of fearing boys, and also to be ashamed of not fearing his parents and instructors. And as, in after life, the fear of God makes no man do any thing mean or dishonourable, but the fear of men does lead to all sorts of weakness and baseness; so amongst boys the fear of their parents and teachers will only make them manly, and noble, and high

spirited ; but the fear of their companions leads them to every thing low, and childish, and contemptible. Those boys, then, who try to make others idle, and laugh at them for trying to please their masters, are exactly like the men who laugh at their neighbours for being religious, and for living in the fear of God : and both are like the more hardened ruffians in a gang of thieves or other criminals, whose amusement it is to laugh at the fear of justice, which beginners in crime have not yet quite got over. In all these instances there is not only the guilt of our own sin, but the far worse guilt of encouraging sin in others ; and, as I showed you last Sunday how your school faults, although very trifling in their worldly consequences, were yet as serious in the sight of God as the faults of grown men, because they showed that you were not serving or loving him, but serving and loving evil ; so it may be said, without the least going beyond the truth, that a boy who, being idle himself, tries to make others idle also, is exactly “ offending one of those little ones who believe in Christ,” and is in the daily habit of that sin which Christ says it were better for him to die directly than to be guilty of.

Again, with regard to Extravagance, and the breach of school regulations. There are some boys who, remembering the wishes of their parents, are extremely unwilling to incur debts, and to spend

a great deal of money upon their own eating, and drinking, and amusements. There are some too, who, knowing that the use of wine or any liquor of that sort is forbidden, because the use of it among boys is sure to be the abuse of it, would not wish to indulge in any thing of the kind themselves. But they are assailed by the example, and the reproaches, and the laughter of others. It is mean, and poor spirited, and ungenerous, not to contribute to the pleasures and social enjoyments of their companions ; in short, not to do as others do. The charge of stinginess, of not spending his money liberally, is one which a boy is particularly sore at hearing. He forgets that in his case such a charge is the greatest possible folly. Where is the generosity of spending money which is not your own, and which, as soon as it is spent, is to be supplied again with no sacrifice on your part ? Where is the stinginess of not choosing to beg money of your dearest friends, in order to employ it in a manner which those friends would disapprove of ?—for, after all, the money must come from them, as you have it not, nor can you earn it for yourselves. But there is another laugh behind : a boy is laughed at for being kept so strictly at home that he cannot get money as he likes ; and he is taught to feel ashamed and angry at the hard restraint which is laid upon him. Truly that boy has gone a good way in the devil's service, who will dare to

set another against his father and his mother, who will teach him that their care and authority are things which he should be ashamed of. Of those who can do this, well may Christ say, that "it were better for them that a millstone were tied about their neck, and that they were drowned in the depth of the sea." Yet these things are done; and the consciences of many who now hear me will say to the eye of Him who can look into the inmost heart, that they are the doers of them.

For you who are assailed by these and other such temptations,—for you, whom Christ calls his children, and whom the devil and his servants would fain make ashamed of your Father and your Lord,—for you, who are laughed at because you will not be idle, or drunken, or extravagant, or undutiful, or in some way or other base and low principled,—beware lest you suffer yourselves to be "offended," that is, lest you are laughed and frightened out of your eternal salvation. After all, they that are with you are more and greater than they who are against you—all the wise and good and noble among yourselves; all good and wise and honourable men; all blessed spirits that love the service of God, and delight to aid those who are fighting in his cause; and, above all, that Holy and Eternal Spirit himself, your Comforter and mighty Deliverer, whose aid and perpetual presence with

you was purchased by your Redeemer's blood. Trust in these, and be not afraid of all that hell and its servants can do to you: "Fear not them who can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

SERMON IX.

ROMANS i. 16.

I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

I SPOKE last Sunday of the wickedness, the very great wickedness, of tempting others to do wrong, or laughing at them and abusing them for doing right. And I said a few words, in conclusion, to those who were suffering under this trial, encouraging them to go on without fear, knowing that He who was for them was mightier than they who were against them. But in schools, as in the world at large, the very good and the very bad are both but few ; it is those who are a mixture of good and bad who make up the great majority. There are, I hope and believe, very few, if any, among you, who wilfully follow after what is evil ; who, in the words of the Psalm, hate to be reformed, and who cast God's words behind them. It is unnatural that, at your age, you should be so confirmed in evil as this. On the other hand, they, too, I fear, cannot be many, although I hope and believe there are some, who may fairly be said

to be amongst the honest and good hearts, which, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit, "some an hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." This also, I fear, is unnatural; for ripened goodness in unripe age can be scarcely more looked for than ripened wickedness. The great majority of you will certainly be between these two points; wishing to be good, when they think seriously about it, and honouring it when they hear of it at a distance, and being actually good in some things themselves; but very generally, not thinking seriously about it, not honouring it, but often laughing at it, when it comes before them in the conduct of their companions in common life; and, in many points, being very far from good in their own practice. It is to these, then, quite as much as to the few who are already serving God more entirely, that what I am going to say will be addressed; it is these whom I am going to urge "not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." You will be, perhaps, inclined to say that you are not ashamed of it, and should think very ill of any one who were to say that he was so. And you may, possibly, have heard the words explained of those people in the old times, who were afraid to call themselves Christians, because they would be rejected by their families and friends, and, perhaps, be exposed to imprisonment or death, if they had confessed

the name of Jesus. Certainly, such times are happily over, and no one runs any risk of being cast off by his friends, or punished by the law, for calling himself a Christian. But I am not sure that he would not run some risk, not of being punished by the law, but of being looked at very strangely, at least, by many of his friends and acquaintances, for always acting like a Christian. And this applies very much to you here. You know that what is called false shame is wonderfully strong in keeping you from acting as you ought to do in many respects; and I will give some common instances of it,—some in what are called particularly religious duties, and others in matters which are, in fact, no less matters of religion, though they are not called so.

To begin with the first sort. I am very far from saying that the practice of prayer, or of reading the Bible, or of coming to the communion, is, in itself, generally delightful to you. If you were really fond of these things, you would be a good deal further advanced in the love of Christ than we may dare to expect. But although not generally delightful, yet I believe that they would be practised oftener than they are, if it were not for a false shame of what may be said or thought by others. It would seem very strange to be seen reading the Bible; and it would be thought unusual, or, at least, you would be afraid

lest it should be thought so, if any boy, not in the higher part of the school, were to go to the communion. The false shame, in the latter case, takes a very artful form: it is not only a fear of being thought over-religious, but a fear of being thought to receive the sacrament in order to please man rather than God; in other words, you sometimes are afraid to come to the Lord's table, lest you should be thought to be only trying to make *us* think well of you, not to obey the command of Christ. Now, certainly, it gives me pleasure to see a number of you attending the communion; and it does so for this reason, because I do not believe that there is one amongst you so wicked and so foolish, as to think of going to that holy table only to deceive his master, and make him think him religious. Boys may, and I fear do, try to deceive us in some things. I can fancy some of you wishing to make me think you diligent, when you were really idle; to make me think you quiet and orderly, when you were forward in mischief: but I cannot fancy any one of you wishing to make me think you religious, when you were most grossly profane, and daring to come to the holy communion solely for the purpose of making me believe a lie. This would be a monstrous and unnatural hypocrisy, and one which I am sure it is not in the nature of boys to be guilty of. And therefore, I am glad when

I see many of you at the sacrament, because I believe that you are come there in earnest. But my pleasure arises from this; not that I believe those who come are actually better in their general conduct than many of those who do not come, but because it gives them a chance of becoming so. The communion is like a medicine for the soul; and if we see people willing to take their medicine, we are pleased, not because there is any merit in their taking it, but because we think, that, whereas without it they could not have recovered, now, at least, it is possible that they may. If I see a boy at the communion, it is an earnest that he has had some serious thoughts, that he has made some good resolutions, and has put up, or will do so before he leaves the chapel, some sincere and earnest prayers. The effect of all this may, it is true, be very short-lived; it may never bring forth any fruit that man may notice; I may never have reason to think that the boy is really the better for having attended the communion: still I am glad to see him there, because I feel that, at that time at least, he is resolving and praying to be better. And this I believe, and will believe, of every individual whom I see there; and you yourselves, I think, would agree with me, and would not suspect any one of your number of going to that holy table from any other reason, than

because he was, at that time at least, wishing to become better, and desirous of taking the means that Christ has recommended to make him better.

But after all, I will go further ; for it is a thing which it concerns you to hear, and I will not shrink from speaking it. At your age, the good opinion and approbation of your masters is a thing which you ought not to be ashamed to desire. As a lower motive, and as one that may help you gradually to ascend to a higher one, I say you ought not to be ashamed of it ; but rather to be ashamed of not feeling it. What folly is it to tax such a motive as this with meanness ! It might, possibly, be meanness, if you could gain any actual profit by it ; if, because we thought well of a boy, he had more holidays, or less work, or more indulgences of some kind or another than his companions ; or if he would not be punished, if, relying on our good opinion, he were to be guilty of any offence. Our good opinion of a boy, in point of moral character, would do him no other good, than the mere pleasure of feeling that he possessed it ; and certainly there are few pleasures purer in their nature than this. Or, if we expressed our good opinion of him to his parents, it would, no doubt, give them great pleasure, and he would have the greater delight of knowing that they approved and re-

spected him ; but, beyond this, I doubt whether it would procure him the same actual rewards, or additional indulgences, as if he had carried home with him a prize for successful diligence and ability in school business. I say, then, that there is nothing to be got from our good opinion, in that gross sense in which low minds, who can understand nothing generous or noble, are accustomed to think of *getting*. But there is to be got from it a pure and truly desirable pleasure—the good opinion and respect of those, who, from age and situation, are capable of forming an opinion, and whom it is your duty to try to satisfy, as they are, by God's appointment, under your parents, your teachers and judges, and those who have to watch for your souls as men who shall give account to Him who is at once their Master and yours.

I now proceed to the remaining part of my subject, and am to give instances, in matters not commonly called religious, of that shame so often felt by young persons at following the Gospel of Christ, and feeling as Christ would have them feel. And it happens that here we have the example of our Lord himself recorded for our benefit. Very little has, as we know, been mentioned of our Lord's early life, and nothing at all is told merely to satisfy our curiosity. Yet in the short story from which the words of the text are taken, we find a lesson given as to the very main points of our duty when

young ; as, in the fuller record of his older life, we find our guide and example for those points on which we most need instruction in manhood. And it is worth while to notice what those points are : they are, first, an earnest desire to improve himself, that so he might be fit for his Father's service, when he should be arrived at riper years ; and, secondly, a dutiful obedience to his parents, while he was as yet under age. Further, to show that this is an example exactly suited to your case who now hear me, I may just remind you that our Lord was at this time twelve years old, a period neither too late nor too early to fit it exactly for your imitation. I have already spoken of the false shame which often hinders you from performing what are peculiarly called your religious duties. But, strange to say, you sometimes learn to feel ashamed of indulging your natural affections, and particularly of being attached to your mothers and sisters, and fond of their society. You fancy it is unmanly to be thought to be influenced by them, and you are afraid of being supposed to long too much for their tenderness and indulgent kindness towards you. Thus you affect a bluntness and hardness which, at first, you cannot put on without an effort ; but the effort is made, and that from a false shame of being laughed at for seeming too fond of home. The effort is made, and it is continued, till, sometimes I fear, it ceases to be an effort, and the

coldness, which was at first merely put on, becomes at last a natural temper. I am afraid it cannot be doubted that it is peculiarly the effect of the public schools of England to lower and weaken the connexion between parent and child, to lessen mutual confidence, and to make a son regard his father with more of respect than of love. Certainly, at least, the relation in other countries of Europe is on a different footing : there is more of cordial intimacy, more of real familiar friendship between parents and children, than generally exists among us. And the cause of this difference belongs greatly, I think, to the feelings and habits acquired at school. In the first place, you are absent from home so large a portion of the year, that other persons and other objects engross, of necessity, a large share of your thoughts and feelings. The absence, certainly, you cannot help ; but you may help increasing its natural effect by your own conduct. You become ashamed of speaking of your homes and relations in the natural language of a good heart ; you talk of them to one another as affording you such and such enjoyments ; and you are ashamed if it appears that other boys have greater liberty, and are more indulged at home than yourselves. And this extends to school also : you do not like to have less money than other boys, —to have fewer presents sent you,—to find your friends more unwilling to pay your debts, than the friends of other boys are to pay theirs. This not

only interferes with your pleasures, but hurts your pride; and I believe that the annoyance to your pride is very often what you mind the most. Thus talking, and thus feeling towards home, the effect of long absence is increased tenfold; concealment and restraint are sometimes the dispositions with which you meet your fathers; you do not like to tell them all that you have done; and you think yourselves hardly used if your requests have not been all complied with. In this undutiful and unchildlike temper, the period which you spend at home is too short to soften you. You return again to school, and the mischief rapidly increases; and it too often happens, that when you go from school to college, the evil becomes yet worse; extravagance there is practised on a larger scale, and is often accompanied with other vices, which make confidence towards a parent still more difficult. Then comes actual life, and you go to other parts of the world, or settle at a distance from your father's house: the opportunities of undoing the bad and cold impressions of early life are no more attainable; and all that passes between father and son is a few letters, and a few short visits, till the son is called on to perform his last act of duty, in following his father's body to the grave.

Far, very far, am I from saying or thinking that this is always, or even generally the case to the full extent: but it is the tendency of schools to produce

such a state of things : it is the tendency of that false shame, that hateful and contemptible pride, which seals your lips against the expressions of duty and affection, which makes you affect to be undutiful before you are so in reality. Yet so catching is this shame, that I am afraid even those boys among you, who have the happiness of being at once both at school and at home, are tempted to throw away their advantages. The situation of those boys I have always thought most fortunate ;—with all the opportunities of forming lasting friendships with those of their own age which a public school so largely affords, and with the opportunity also of keeping up all their home affections, of never losing that lively interest in all that is said and done under their father's roof, which an absence of several months cannot fail, in some measure, to chill. Your fault then is by so much the greater, if you make yourselves strangers to domestic feelings and affections, through your own fault ; if you think you have any dearer friendships, or any that can better become either youth or manhood, than those which God himself has marked out for you in your own homes. Add others to them if you will, and it is your wisdom and your duty to do so ; but beware how you let any less sacred connexion weaken the solemn and universal bond of domestic love. Remember, that when Christ took our nature upon him, and went through every stage of human life to

show us our peculiar duties in each, one of the only two things recorded of him, before he arrived at manhood, is his dutiful regard to his parents : “ He went down to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.”

The other thing recorded of him, is, that it was his pleasure to gain such knowledge as would fit him for the discharge of his duty in active life hereafter. He was found by his parents in the temple, “ sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.” It is strangely mistaking the meaning of this account, and utterly destroying its usefulness, to call this, as some have done, “ Christ’s preaching in the temple ;” as if, at twelve years old, and long before he had begun his ministry, he would have attempted to teach the authorized teachers of his country. The drift of the story is wholly different : it does not represent him as doing what no one could imitate without presumption and folly, but as doing and feeling what all those of his age ought to do, and feel also. He was anxious to gain improvement, and took pains of his own accord to gain it. How often do you neglect it when it is brought before you, and every wish of your friends urges you to acquire it ! He was interested in what he heard, and tried to get a thorough understanding of it ; he did not only sit and hear what was said, as if that were in itself of any use, but he wished to heed and to profit by it. He was

found hearing the doctors in the temple, and asking them questions: if any thing in what they said was too hard for him, if he could not fully comprehend it, he asked for more explanation;—he asked questions about it, because he wished to know it. You will say perhaps that this was about religious subjects, and that these are very different from common lessons. It is true it was about religious subjects, but it seems that it was with a view to his future calling in life: it was to gain that knowledge, which afterwards shone forth so admirably in his own discourses, when, like the wise householder of his own parable, he brought forth out of his treasure things new and old, and made every object in nature, and every truth relating to human society and human character, serve the purposes of the kingdom of God. The point in the example is, that you should in youth gain the knowledge which may make you better and wiser men hereafter; which may enable you to glorify God in your generation by a wise and understanding heart, and an able and eloquent tongue; which, amidst the infinitely varied relations of society in our days, where there is scarcely a subject on which ignorance does not make us less useful, and knowledge more so, may enable you to ornament the common intercourse of life, and to direct with judgment its practical concerns, filling you with a lively perception and an ardent love of what is beautiful, of what is

true, of what is good. After all, this must, in some degree, be a matter which you must at present be content to believe on the testimony of others. The object of education is to benefit your manhood ; and you must, therefore, arrive at manhood before this benefit can be fully tasted or comprehended. Meantime, it is most certain, that your business here is in truth the business of your heavenly Father ; that it is a duty, which he who wishes to do his Father's will must be anxious to perform zealously. " Both hearing them and asking them questions : "—not only sitting to listen to, or rising up to repeat, words which are forgotten as soon as heard or said ; but anxious to remember and to understand what you say and what you hear, that the fruit of it may remain, and that you may be doing God's pleasure now, and may understand in this, as well as in other matters, when the time for knowledge is come, that no one ever tried to do his pleasure without feeling that he had chosen the better part, and that to do the will of God was the best wisdom, both for earth and heaven.

SERMON X.

JOHN xvi. 12, 13.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.

IN these words our Lord describes two sorts of persons,—those who cannot yet bear the truth, and those who, through the guiding of the Spirit, are led into all truth. They who could not yet bear it were, we see, our Lord's own disciples ;—they who had followed him from the beginning of his ministry ;—they, of whom he had just before said, that they were all clean, except Judas who betrayed him. Still, he had much to say which they could not yet bear, but which they should be able to bear and to understand when the Spirit of truth should come, and lead them into all truth. These words were applicable to our Lord's twelve first disciples, and they are much more applicable to many of us. There are many in every age,—many I had almost said in every congregation,—who cannot bear all

that Christ has to say unto them, because they are not yet led by the Spirit, and neither their hearts nor their understandings can receive the perfect truth.

If we want a more ancient example of this, the whole history of the Old Testament will furnish one. There, although in the successive revelations of successive ages much was told, still much also was forborne: the hardness of the hearts of the Israelites was the reason why they were allowed some things, which in a riper state of knowledge men would shrink from; why there was a veil over their faces, which hid from them the end of their own dispensation. But there are many who are in this respect Israelites among us; there are many who are still living under the law, and who cannot yet understand or feel the voice of the Spirit. Christ has many things to say unto them, but they cannot bear them now.

For this reason, and because I know that, from your age and many other circumstances, many of you are of this class, I have not spoken to you, in the sermons I have lately preached from this place, in the way that some perhaps might have expected: I have not dwelt so much upon your redemption by Jesus Christ, as upon your own particular faults and temptations: I have used the language of the law more than that of the Gospel. I have done this, because I thought it not in itself

the best and highest instruction, but because I was afraid that you could not understand profitably any other. When I mention common things of your daily life,—common faults which you every day commit, common feelings which every day pass through your hearts and minds,—you attend, and carefully take in what I am saying ; but, if I were to use the language of St. Paul's Epistles, and speak of your acquittal by faith in Christ only, of your having no confidence in your own works, but being created in Christ Jesus through the Spirit to do good works, your feelings would, I fear, be very little interested. You would think that this was the common language of sermons, and would not so readily bring it home to yourselves. And I will tell you why you would not. The whole of the Gospel message is one of comfort to those who feel themselves sinners,—to those whose consciences trouble them, and who fear the anger of God, and wish to flee from it. It is a medicine for the sick, which they who do not feel themselves sick, cannot be persuaded to care for. You remember what our Lord himself said of the different manner in which he was treated by the Pharisee who asked him to supper, and by the woman who came in while he sat at meat, and washed his feet with her tears. "There was a certain creditor," he said, "who had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing

to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet : but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint : but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much ; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” I have copied the whole of the story, for it is so striking a picture of our common state of mind towards Christ. We hear his words with respect,—the Pharisee evidently respected Christ, and wished to show his attention to him by asking him into his house : but, when the question is of loving him, of believing in him as our only Saviour, of fleeing to him as our peace with God, through whose merits our sins are washed away, truly we feel no disposition for this. Our sins give us no anxiety ; we care nothing for being at peace with God, or at enmity ;—we think nothing about our need of being forgiven, and

therefore feel very little love to him who has forgiven us. It is vain therefore to talk to you of Christ, till you feel your want of him ; it is idle to speak to you of the mercy of your redemption, till you have some sense of the danger from which you have been redeemed. If, by having your great and daily faults brought home to you,—if, by seeing how much your lives fall short, I do not say of the law of God, but even of the lives and hearts of good men, even amidst all the imperfections of humanity,—if, by seeing how bad you are, you could learn to wish to be better,—then, indeed, you would be ripe for the doctrine of the cross of Christ ; then the same Spirit, who had done his first work in making you know and feel your sin, would be ready to begin his second, of showing you through whom you are forgiven. “The law is our school-master to bring us unto Christ ;” but Christ will never be sought by those who have never learned to fear the law.

True it is, your faults may be pointed out to you, and yet you may not wish to turn from them : your evil practices and evil principles may be shown to you, and yet you may continue, on the very next temptation, to follow them as before. The fear of God may be preached to you ; but you will continue to be led by the fear of one another. There is nothing new in all this : for forty years the Israelites provoked God in the wilderness ; and of all

that great multitude who had been delivered out of Egypt, who had heard the voice of God giving to them the law of life, and who had been fed with manna from heaven, only two continued stedfast unto the end,—only two entered into the land of promise. So it ever has been, and so it will be. If sin had no present sweetness or present advantage, who would ever be so brutishly foolish as to be guilty of it? We must not wonder at this, nor be discouraged. We are taught that sin will ruin us at last,—not that it will be sure never to gain us any worldly good. The Psalmist said, long ago, that he was grieved because he saw the ungodly in such prosperity; and the last of the prophets, Malachi, said, that many in his time thought it of no use to serve God, because they who tempted God were even delivered; that is, they who sinned often found their profit in it. So also Christ, speaking of the latter times, such as those in which we are now living, says, “that because iniquity shall abound, the love of many will wax cold:” that is, because the wicked shall go through life unpunished, many will grow tired of the service of Christ, and think that the wages of sin will answer better. Nor will it be till this earth and all that are in it are burnt up, that their calculation can be proved to have been as foolish as it was wicked. Be not therefore surprised at this, nor discouraged, you, whoever and how many soever you may be,

who can bear Christ's words, and are guided by Christ's Spirit, and love your Saviour, because he has saved your souls from sin and destruction. For you the events recorded in this week are not idle words: you have an interest in that most solemn story; nor is it like a mere tale of other days, that Christ was betrayed, and crucified, and rose again the third day. In that death, and in that resurrection, are contained to you all that makes it truly an infinite blessing to have been born. For you was Christ mocked, and scourged, and crucified; for you he suffered the fear of death, and the pains of death; for you he rose again from the dead, the first-fruits of them that slept, that he might open the kingdom of heaven to all that slept in his faith and fear. For you he ascended to the right hand of the Father: and in your hearts he lives continually by his Holy Spirit, an earnest of your full and perfect rest. For you, the partaking of the memorials of his body and blood is a solemn and a blessed privilege, reminding you at once of your sins and of your safety;—how weak and lost in yourselves, how strong and how happy in the strength of Christ. What though you see others walking in far different courses, turning a deaf ear to all instruction,—making their belly their God, and glorying all the while in their shame,—remember that the way to destruction is ever wide and easy, and many are they who follow it. But it is better, perhaps, to

draw off your thoughts from them, lest, in thankfulness that you are not as they are, you should forget a Christian's humility and love. You have your own work to do, your own temptations to struggle with ; and that worst temptation besides—that if ever you fall into sin, there will be many to triumph in it, and to glory in the weakness of a true servant of Christ. But go on still in the strength of Christ's Spirit ; and though you fall, yet shall you arise and conquer at the end. And for you who are yet in suspense, not yet able to bear all Christ's words, but still aroused, and inclined to listen to him,—may the seed, once sown, be mercifully preserved and fostered ; may you go on, till you understand the way of God more perfectly ; may it be said of you, not only “that you are not far from the kingdom of God,” but that you have, in sincerity, entered into it, and have made its holiness and its happiness your own !

S E R M O N XI.

(PREACHED ON TRINITY SUNDAY.)

I TIMOTHY iii. 16.

Great is the mystery of godliness.

FEW words in the New Testament have ever been more strangely misinterpreted than these: few could be found which have been equally perverted, inasmuch as they have been used to inculcate notions, the very opposite to their real meaning. They have been continually quoted, as speaking of the darkness and difficulty of some points in Christianity; whereas their real purpose is to commend the great and glorious nature of those truths which it has made known. They are understood to say, that the secrets of Christianity are wonderful, and above the understanding of men to fathom; whereas their real meaning is, that it is the revelations of Christianity which are so wonderful, that what had been hid from all the wise and prudent of the world, and what the world, by wisdom, never could

have attained to, was, by the Gospel, revealed unto babes, and made so familiar, that all could know, and all might love it.

Above all, it is with reference to the great truth which the Church this day commemorates, that the supposed meaning of the text has been as mischievous as its true meaning would be beneficial. Its supposed meaning has been mischievous, because, by teaching people to regard the Trinity as an incomprehensible mystery, it has naturally made them regard it as a subject rather awful and wonderful, than full of the deepest practical benefit. Its true meaning would be beneficial, as it calls upon us to thank God for his goodness, in having manifested himself to us more than he had ever done before to Jew or Gentile; in having made all his goodness pass before us; in having taught us to love him as our Redeemer, and having vouchsafed to abide with his Church for ever, as our Comforter and Sanctifier.

“Great,” indeed, “is the mystery of godliness!” great, and for ever blessed, is that secret, concealed from the foundation of the world, and revealed by the Spirit of Christ to Christ’s true disciples; the secret of Him who “was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” Such are the words which follow directly those

that I have taken for my text : and how much is there to be found in them !

It is well known that about one word in this passage there is a great uncertainty ; that whereas our translation runs, " Great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh," &c. ; there is very high authority, and many very strong reasons, for reading, " Great is the mystery of godliness, who was manifest in the flesh," &c. ; that is to say, " Great are the truths concerning that wonderful Person, whom the Gospel has revealed to us ; for he was manifest in the flesh," &c. He calls Christ the " Mystery of Godliness," or, " the great Secret revealed by the Gospel ;" inasmuch as he is the Author and Finisher of our faith, and the one great subject of the Gospel revelation. I mention this, because, in preaching on a text of which any of the words are doubtful, it is right to state plainly that there is a doubt about them. But as our common reading, if not the true one in word, is a very exact and forcible expression of it in spirit, so I shall follow it on the present occasion, without pretending to enter upon any critical questions, for which this is neither the time nor the place.

The substance, then, of the Gospel revelation is, that God was manifest in the flesh, and justified in the Spirit ; that he was seen of angels, and preached to the Gentiles ; that he was believed on

in the world, and received up into glory. Now let us attend to each of these points in order.

The first words are similar to those of St. Peter, where he says, that Christ was “put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit;” or, to those again of St. Paul himself, in the Epistle to the Romans, where he says, that Christ was “made of the seed of David according to the flesh; but declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” In all these places, and in more which might be quoted, there is a distinction drawn between the flesh and the Spirit; between the human nature of Christ and his divine nature; between the Son of Man and the Son of God. Because we were sinners, he became man, and died; but because he was God, he was not only himself freed from death, but we also, through faith in him, shall be raised to life also. We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; and, being reconciled, are saved by his life, because he broke the bands of death, and liveth for evermore, through the Divine Spirit which was in him.

Next it says, “He was seen of angels, and preached to the Gentiles.” By the word “angels,” or “messengers,” is meant, not only those spiritual beings, whom we commonly call by that name, but their earthly fellow-servants also, the prophets and apostles, who have been permitted to share with

them in the great work of giving glory to God, and doing good to men. By these, says the Apostle, "God in Christ was seen." God the Father, as he is in himself, no man hath seen, or can see; but "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." In him God has spoken to man face to face: with Abraham, on the plain of Mamre; with Moses, on Mount Sinai; again with Moses and Elijah, on Mount Tabor; with his chosen Apostles, for weeks and months together, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee; with Paul, the last of the Apostles, as with one born out of due time, he spoke, after his ascension, from heaven. But these all saw and believed; these his earthly messengers, as well as those heavenly ones who announced his birth to the shepherds, and his resurrection to his sorrowing disciples, these all saw him with their eyes, and heard him, and talked with him. Of them he was seen; and by them, his witnesses, he was preached unto the Gentiles. They who sat in darkness, and who lived without him in the world, to them was his salvation made known, and his holy name declared. And lest they might, after all, be disposed to envy the lot of his chosen messengers, who had seen him with their eyes,—while to them he was only preached, they but heard of him from the reports of others,—his own especial word has been recorded for their—I had better said for

our—comfort; for their case is ours. “Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Lastly, it says, “that he was believed on in the world, and received up into glory.” This comes naturally after the words that had just been used before. He was preached to the Gentiles, and they believed: the kingdoms of the earth did him homage; from the rising to the going down of the sun, all nations have heard of his name, and all the world is full of his glory. Not in one little country only, or amongst one single people; but all the ends of the earth have heard the salvation of our God, and Egypt and Babylon are become united with Israel,—a blessing in the midst of the land. This is the kingdom of Christ; this is the fruit of his sufferings, and of the labours of his servants. But here it is no more “God manifest in the flesh,” or seen with the outward eyes of his messengers. “He was received up into glory;”—he went away that the Comforter might come unto his people in his stead;—he ceased to be manifest in the flesh, to be seen with the bodily eye, that his Spirit might be made manifest to our spirits—that he might be more than seen by those who willingly received him, and in whose hearts he found a temple, wherein he might continually abide. “He was received up into glory and gave gifts unto men;”—the gift of his Holy

Spirit, which, so long as he was manifest in the flesh, was not given. St. Paul himself has taught us to associate the ascension of Christ with the descent of the Holy Spirit; and, indeed, were we not so to associate it, it would rather be a subject of sorrow than of joy. The revelation of the Gospel ends then with its concluding and final truth, that the Son of God was taken up into glory, and that the Spirit of God was to abide with his people, till the Son shall again return from heaven, when all things are at last accomplished. He was manifested in the flesh to take away our sins, and was received up into glory when the kingdom of heaven was opened by his blood to all believers, and his Spirit henceforth was required to fit them for entrance into that kingdom, by forming them again after his image.

This then is the mystery of godliness;—this is the great truth, unknown and undiscoverable by our unaided reason, which the Gospel has now made known to us. For what we know of God the Father, although that too has mercifully been confirmed by his own word, yet, according to St. Paul, it was not undiscoverable by our own reason, but rather it is made a matter of blame that men did not make it out for themselves. The works of creation so clearly declare their Author, that they who turned from the worship of the one true God to make to themselves gods of things created,

whether in heaven or in earth, are left, in the words of the Apostle, without excuse. The knowledge then of God the Father,—I mean such knowledge of him as we have ever gained, or can gain,—is not called a mystery; because a mystery, in the language of the Apostles, means a truth revealed, which we could not have found out if it had not been told us. Yet, as experience has shown that men did not, in fact, make themselves acquainted with God the Father, so it has been mercifully ordered, that even what we could have discovered if we would, has yet been expressly revealed to us; and the Law and the Prophets are no less full and plain in pointing out our relations to God the Father, than the Gospel is in pointing out our relations to God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.

I would beg attention to these words, “that the Scripture is full and clear in pointing out our relations to God.” For the revelations or mysteries of the Gospel, like those of the Law and the Prophets, never pretend to tell us any thing of the nature of God as he is in himself. This, indeed, is a mystery; not in the sense in which that word is used in the Scripture, but in the sense in which we commonly use it now: it is not a truth revealed, which could not otherwise have been known; but a truth which has not and cannot be revealed, and which cannot be known at all. And mysteries of this sort, and in this sense, are indeed incomprehensible: but,

then, they are no part of revelation, as it is in fact a flat contradiction to talk of revealing or making visible what is not and cannot be revealed. Such points as this are no matters of belief: for it is folly to talk of believing what we cannot understand. I do not mean that we cannot believe a thing unless we understand *how* it is effected; but that we cannot believe it unless we understand *what* it means;—as otherwise, it is evident, that we can only believe that something is something: we can no more believe it, than we could believe a proposition in an unknown language. But far, very far, are the truths revealed in the Scriptures, from being of such a character as this. We cannot indeed understand *how* the divine and human natures were united in the person of Christ, nor *how* the Holy Spirit influences our minds; but we can full well understand, and know, and feel, what it is that is meant, when it is said, that He who was in the form of God, that is, whose being and nature were divine, “took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man;”—or, when it is said, that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;”—or when, again, we are told that God “will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him,”—and that this Holy Spirit strives with our evil nature, is grieved by our wilful and ungrateful coldness, and is utterly blasphemed by

our continued hardness and impenitence. We all can understand what this means: would to God, that we all, in the Scripture sense of the word, *believed* it: that is, that it had entered not only into our understandings, but into our very heart of hearts, a daily living fountain of peace, and hope, and joy.

True it is, that this Bread of Life does not nourish us all; and instead of seeing that the fault is in ourselves, and that to our sickly bodies the most wholesome food will lose its virtue, we are apt to question the power and usefulness of the food itself. True it is, that if we were but good and holy, it would be an idle question to ask about our faith, when our lives ^{*}sufficiently declared it. So, if a man were strong and healthy, it would be needless to inquire about the quality of his food. But not more foolish is it to suppose that a man can be strong and healthy without wholesome food, than to think that we can be good and holy without a Christian's faith. Even with that faith, how far are we from what we ought to be—even the best and holiest of us all; yet those who have tried it know that without that faith they would be nothing at all; and that, in whatever degree they have overcome the world or themselves, it is owing to their faith in the promises of God the Father, resting on the atonement of the blood of his Son, and given and strengthened by the abiding aid and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

SERMON XII.

GALATIANS iii. 24.

The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.

IN the sermon which I preached last Sunday from this place, I could not forbear from entering into some detail upon the great and peculiar truths of Christianity. The day seemed to call for such a choice of a subject, as it was set apart to commemorate, not one part only of the scheme of our redemption, like the feasts of Christmas, or Easter, or Whitsuntide, but the whole of it together ; all our relations to God, and all that God has done for us are concentrated in a manner in the celebration of Trinity Sunday. Yet, even at the very time when I was thus dwelling on the great truths of the Gospel, I doubted whether my hearers were sufficiently advanced to receive them. I do not mean advanced in understanding,—for in that respect they are, indeed, easy,—but advanced in Christian feelings and Christian practice. By what strange error could it

have ever happened that the doctrines of the Gospel have been regarded as little bearing upon our practice, but because the practice of so many, who call themselves Christians, has been unfit to receive them? It is an awful but a certain truth, that the very foundation of Christianity, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," is heard continually with no lively impression of the inestimable blessing conveyed in it. How should it rightly be valued, when we care so little about the evil of sin, and think there is nothing very alarming in the condition of a sinner? Therefore the words of the Apostle are for ever useful, and apply to the successive stages of our individual growth, no less than to the successive periods in the existence of the world; "The law is our school-master to bring us unto Christ:" and it is vain to hope that we shall ever attain to the full faith and love of a Christian, without having first gone to school to the teaching of the law.

For this reason it is, that on former occasions I have spoken less than some, perhaps, might expect, of the promises of the Gospel; and have dwelt much more upon your own individual faults and duties. Assuredly, if any one among you were filled with an entire hatred of sin,—if he were thoroughly anxious to become like God, and felt most deeply the infinite distance between the most pure and most high God, and himself a

sinner,—to such an one I would hasten to hold forth the Gospel promises,—to such an one I would repeat all those comfortable words, of which the Scripture is so full—that there is no condemnation for those who believe in Christ, and that all who believe in him are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. I would say, that, through the aid of Christ's Spirit they should be daily renewed after Christ's image, till their resemblance to God should be the sure sign that they were, indeed, the children of God. This, I say, is the language which we should use to those who are really anxious about their salvation; who really are dissatisfied with and distrust themselves, and love and entirely desire to please God. It was when the publican said, in sincerity and earnestness of heart, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” that he went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee. It was when Job confessed that he had endeavoured to justify himself in vain, and that he now abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes, that the answer of God was given, that he had spoken the thing that was right, and that his latter end should be blessed more than his beginning. But I fear, that, to most of you, the best proof that the mercies of your redemption are not the fittest subject on which to address you, is contained in the fact, that you are so little interested in hearing of them :

“The law then must be your schoolmaster to bring you unto Christ ;” that is, we must try if, by any means, declaring to you the pure and perfect law of God, and contrasting it with your own principles and practice, we can succeed in making you feel your sin and your danger, and so, ready and eager to fly to Christ for deliverance.

What the aspect of public schools is, when viewed with a Christian’s eye,—and what are the feelings with which men, who do really turn to God in after life, look back upon their years passed at school,—I cannot express better than in the words of one¹ who had himself been at a public school, who did afterwards become a most exemplary Christian, and who, in what I am going to quote, seems to describe his own experience : “ Public schools,” he says, “ are the very seats and nurseries of vice. It may be unavoidable, or it may not ; but the fact is indisputable. None can pass through a large school without being pretty intimately acquainted with vice ; and few, alas ! very few without tasting too largely of that poisoned bowl. The hour of grace and repentance at length arrives, and they are astonished at their former fatuity. The young convert looks back with inexpressible regret to those hours which have been wasted in folly, or

¹ The late Mr. John Bowdler.—See his “Remains,” Vol. II. p. 153. Third edition.

worse than folly : and the more lively his sense of the newly discovered mercies, the more piercing his anguish for past indulgences.” Now, although too many of us may not be able to join in the last part of this description, yet we must all, I think, be able to bear witness to the truth of the first part. We may not all share in the after repentance, but we must know that our school life has given ample cause for repentance. “Public schools are the very seats and nurseries of vice. It may be unavoidable, or it may not ; but the fact is indisputable.” These are the words of the sensible and excellent man whom I have just alluded to : and with what feelings ought we all to read them, and to listen to them ? I am afraid the fact is, indeed, indisputable—“Public schools *are* the very seats and nurseries of vice.” But he goes on to say, “It may be unavoidable, or it may not :” and these words seem to me as though they ought to fill us with the deepest shame of all. For what a notion does it give, that we should have been so long and so constantly bad, that it may be doubted whether our badness be not unavoidable—whether we are not evil hopelessly and incurably. And this to be true of places which were intended to be seats of Christian education ; and in all of which, I believe, the same words are used in the daily prayers which we use regularly here ! God

is thanked for those founders and benefactors, “by whose benefits the whole school is brought up to godliness and good learning!” Brought up to godliness and good learning, in places that are the very seats and nurseries of vice! But the doubt, whether our viciousness be or be not unavoidable, is something too horrible to be listened to. Surely we cannot regard ourselves as so utterly reprobate, as so thoroughly accursed of God. “The earth, which beareth briers and thorns, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, though we thus speak;” or else, indeed, our labour would be utterly vain. But then our hope that this viciousness is not unavoidable, depends upon you, whether or no you choose to make it so. Outward order, regularity, nay, even advancement in learning, may be, up to a certain point, enforced; but no man can force another to be good, or hinder him from being evil. It must be your own choice and act, whether, indeed, you wish this place to be “unavoidably a seat and nursery of vice,” or whether you wish to verify the words of our daily thanksgiving, that, by the benefit of our founder, “you are here brought up to godliness and good learning.”

But, it may be asked, what is meant when public schools are called “the seats and nurseries of vice?” It is not difficult to find out in what sense

a Christian writer must have used the expression. That is properly a nursery of vice, where a boy unlearns the pure and honest principles which he may have received at home, and gets, in their stead, others which are utterly low, and base, and mischievous,—where he loses his modesty, his respect for truth, and his affectionateness, and becomes coarse, and false, and unfeeling. That, too, is a nursery of vice, and most fearfully so, where vice is bold, and forward, and presuming; and goodness is timid and shy, and existing as if by sufferance,—where the good, instead of setting the tone of society, and branding with disgrace those who disregard it, are themselves exposed to reproach for their goodness, and shrink before the open avowal of evil principles, which the bad are striving to make the law of the community. That is a nursery of vice where the restraints laid upon evil are considered as so much taken from liberty, and where, generally speaking, evil is more willingly screened and concealed, than detected and punished. What society would be, if men regarded the laws of God and man as a grievance, and thought liberty consisted in following to the full their proud, and selfish, and low inclinations,—that schools to a great extent are: and, therefore, they may be well called “the seats and nurseries of vice.”

Now then, to what is this owing? Public schools are made up of the very same persons

whom we have known a few years earlier, to be pure-minded and obedient children,—whom we know, a few years later, to be at least decent and useful men. What especial cloud hangs over this one part of our life's current, that the stream here will ever run dark and sullen, while on its earlier and its later course it is either all bright and lively, or the impurity of its waters is lost to the distant view in the breadth and majesty of their volume? I must touch upon the causes, or how shall we be able to point out the remedies?

Unquestionably, the time of life at which you are arrived, and more particularly the younger boys among you, is, in itself, exceedingly dangerous. It is just the time, beyond all others in life, when temptation is great, and the strength of character to resist it exceedingly small. Earlier, under your parents' roof, the taint of evil reached you with far less virulence,—you were surrounded with all influences of good. Later, you will be exposed, indeed, to enough of evil, but you will have gained at least more experience, and more strength of mind, to resist it. It is a great matter too, that your bodies, at your time of life, so far outgrow your minds;—that your spirits and bodily strength are so vigorous and active, while your understandings are, in comparison, so feeble. This makes you unapt and unwilling to think; and he who does

not think, must surely do one of two things,—he must submit himself entirely to be guided by the advice and direction of others, like young children, or else he must certainly go wrong. Another cause is, that at no place, or time of life, are people so much the slaves of custom, as boys at school. If a thing has been an old practice, be it ever so mischievous, ever so unworthy, it is continued without scruple; if a thing is new, be it ever so useful and ever so excellent, it is apt to be regarded as a grievance. The question which boys seem to ask, is not, What ought we to be, and what may the school become, if we do our duty?—but, What have we been used to, and is the school as good as it was formerly? So, looking backwards, instead of looking forwards,—comparing ourselves with ourselves, instead of with the Word of God,—we are sure never to grow better, because we lose the wish to become better: and growth in goodness will never come, without our vigorous efforts to attain to it. This cause extends a great way, and produces more evil than we are apt to think of. Old habits, old practices, are handed down from generation to generation, and, above all, old feelings. Now it is certain that education, like every thing else, was not brought to perfection when our great schools were first founded: the system had a great deal required to make it what it ought to be. I am afraid that Christian principles were not enough brought forward, that

lower motives were encouraged, and a lower standard altogether suffered to prevail. The system also was too much one of fear and outward obedience; the obedience of the heart and the understanding were little thought of. And the consequence has been the same in every old school in England,—that boys have learnt to regard themselves and their masters as opposites to one another, as having two distinct interests;—it being the master's object to lay on restrictions, and abridge their liberty, while it was their business, by all sorts of means,—combination amongst themselves, concealment, trick, open falsehood, or open disobedience,—to baffle his watchfulness, and escape his severity. It cannot be too strong to say, that this is at least so far the case, as far as regards the general business of schools: the boys' interest and pleasure are supposed to consist in contriving to have as little work as they can, the master's in putting on as much as he can; a strange and sad state of feeling, which must have arisen, I fear, from the habit of keeping out of sight the relation in which we both stand, masters and boys alike, to our common Master in heaven, and that it is his service which we all have, after our several stations, to labour in. A due sense of our common service to our heavenly Master is inculcated by St. Paul as softening even the hardships of slavery,—although it is the peculiar curse of that wretched system, that the power is there exercised,

not for the good of the governed, but for that of the governor. It is not for his own good, but for the interest merely of his master, that any man is a slave. But our relation to one another, like that of children and parents, is a relation chiefly for your good: it is for your benefit that the restraints of education are intended,—that you may be good, and wise, and happy, in after years, and may bring forth fruit from the seed here sown, which may endure unto life eternal. And this you would all at once acknowledge, if it were not for the old school feeling handed down from one generation to another, and growing out of a system too neglectful of Christian principles, or too fearful of openly professing them. This veil over the heart and understanding, this fatal prejudice, this evil error, like every thing else false, ignorant, and wicked, can only be done away in Christ. When you shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away; and you will be enabled to see clearly your true condition here, what we are endeavouring to make it, and how entirely our objects and interests are the same as your own.

SERMON XIII.

LUKE xiv. 24.

None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

It is perfectly true, that the first and immediate meaning of these words relates to the Jews as a nation. They declare that the people who were first called into the kingdom of God, were to be cast out from it altogether, because they had refused to obey the call. It certainly does first relate to the Jews; but this is not the meaning in which it concerns us now to attend to it. But as the threatenings and promises of the Old Testament are said by St. Paul to apply to Christians, who were, by faith, become the children of Abraham, and partakers of the covenant for good and for evil; so the warning parables of our Lord, in the New Testament, apply to us, and to our children after us: and it is the wisdom of every successive generation to understand them as referring, not to the sins and follies of their fathers, but to their own.

Therefore the parable of the “marriage sup-

per'' should be understood as relating to ourselves. But even thus it is capable of being applied in more than one signification. You may have often heard sermons preached upon it, in which the marriage supper in the parable was understood of the sacrament of the Lord's supper : and the excuses made by the several persons in the story, for refusing to come when they were invited, have been compared with the various excuses so often made amongst us, for refusing to obey Christ's call to the holy communion. And this is a very sound and useful way of making the parable profitable to our own edification. I am going, however, to take it now in rather a different sense ; not as relating particularly to the communion, but generally as it expresses these following points, in the dealings of God with them :—first, His calling them to their own true happiness, and giving them a season wherein the doors of his mercy stand freely open to them :—secondly, the obstinacy with which they neglect this call, and like any thing else better ; and thirdly, the great punishment which they incur, being after a time utterly shut out from happiness, and being placed in a far worse state than if the call had never been made to them at the beginning.

Still, while taking thus the general principle of the parable, it would be unwise not to illus-

trate it by the peculiar circumstances of those who hear me. One congregation is not like another ; and it seems to me, that we should choose, as far as possible, such points to dwell upon, as our hearers may feel not only to concern themselves, but to concern themselves particularly. God's call to you, therefore, is not exactly the same as it is to others ; your reasons for not listening to it are not exactly the same with the reasons of others ; and although the final punishment of disobedience be indeed the same to all, yet the more immediate and earthly one is different, inasmuch as it varies according to the particular nature of that good thing which God offered, and which we declined to accept.

God's call, addressed to the soul of every man, is a call to him to be happy for ever ; and this is the same thing as calling upon him to be holy, for holiness and happiness are one in God, and they are one also in the children of God. Holiness in God's creatures consists in their drawing near to God, and becoming like unto him. No man hath seen God, however, at any time ;—but the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, man has seen : and although now we, in this generation, see him no longer with our bodily eyes, yet with the story of his life and character handed down to us from those who did see and hear him, and with his Spirit ever dwell-

ing amongst us and revealing him to all those who desire him, we do, for all practical purposes, see and know him still. To be like Christ, then, is to be like God: he who has the image of the Son, the same has also the image of the Father. Now in Christ, the main point of imitation to us is this, that in all things he did the will of him who sent him, and laboured to finish his work. This he began from boyhood, and in this he persevered even till that moment when all was accomplished, and he resigned his spirit into the hands of his Father on the cross. To him, God's call was to be the great prophet of his people, to go about doing good, to teach them the knowledge of the Most High, to prepare men's minds for that kingdom of heaven, which by his blood was to be purchased, and preached to all mankind. This was to him, so far as he was man, God's special call;—for his death, as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, belongs to his nature as he was both God and man; and here, therefore, there is no place for our imitation. As, then, Christ laboured all his life, beginning in his boyhood, to obey God's special call to him, so we can best imitate Christ by labouring all our lives to obey God's special call to us. Now this call is made known to us, not by a miracle, nor by a voice from heaven; but partly by the circumstances of our age and outward condition, and partly by the

different faculties and dispositions of our minds. For instance, your youth points out to you one especial call of God, to obey your parents and teachers, and to improve yourselves for the duties which you will hereafter have to perform as men. And your outward circumstances, your birth and condition in life, point out to you another especial call of God ;—that is, they point out to you what particular duties you will have hereafter to perform, and what sort of improvement is particularly required of you. Generally, to all young persons God's call is to improve themselves ; but what particular sort of improvement he calls you to, that you may learn from the station of life in which he has placed you. If you were born in a station, in which you would be called upon to work chiefly with your hands hereafter, then the strengthening of your bodies, the learning to be active and handy, to be bold and enduring of bodily pain and labour, would be your special duty, over and above that common duty of love to God and to man, which belongs to every age and every condition alike. But, as it is, you will be called upon to work chiefly with your minds hereafter : and although it be very true, that the mind works but feebly when the body is sickly ; and that, therefore, you are called upon, like all other persons, to make yourselves, as far as you can, strong and active, and healthful and patient in your bodies ;

yet your especial call is rather to improve your minds, because it is with your minds that God calls upon you to work hereafter. And for the younger part of you, I need not go any further than this: for the particular calling in which you will have to work with your minds,—I mean the particular profession or situation of life which you are to fill,—can hardly yet be fixed: and at any rate, you are yet too young to begin your professional course of studies, and your business is to attend to those studies which are pointed out for you as likely to be useful generally to your understandings, be your profession hereafter what it may.

But some of you are old enough to inquire what is God's call to you, as to the choice of a profession: that is to say, what course of duty is pointed out to you by the particular dispositions and faculties of your minds. It is very true, that this choice does not always rest with yourselves: it is true, also, that you cannot yet fully judge of what your faculties may hereafter ripen to, nor how habit may make your inclinations conform to what now you may feel most strongly to dislike. These are circumstances, which naturally point out to you the benefit of listening to the greater experience of others; and not deciding for yourselves alone. But, although you should not judge for yourselves absolutely, and in defiance of the advice of others, yet it does become you, earnestly and carefully to

look into your own hearts and minds, to observe, so far as you can, what your character is,—what is its strength, and what its weakness;—what are its intellectual faculties, and what its moral tendencies;—what faults it is most prone to, and what duties it seems best fitted successfully to perform. Few parents would refuse to listen to their son, when he laid before them the results of his own best inquiries into his own heart and mind, and accordingly represented his greater fitness for one particular calling, his greater unfitness for another. Nay, every wise parent would rejoice and be thankful to see his son thus opening his character before him; and furnishing him with the knowledge by which he could best judge what was best for him.

Undoubtedly, it is a solemn deliberation in what line of life God calls upon us to serve him; and we know this, that it is beginning with most evil omens, if we enter upon any profession or way of living, to which we cannot humbly believe that he has called us. Family convenience, prospects of preferment, must not outweigh higher considerations; and this applies especially to that most solemn of all callings, and in which, above all others, worldly well-doing in it may be quite independent of the fitness of our hearts and minds for the discharge of its duties. A young man of very low understanding is not likely to be called upon by his friends, or tempted by his own inclination,

to enter upon the profession of the law:—a young man of a feeble body and a weak spirit, unapt, both in body and mind, to encounter toil and danger, will not often wish, or be wished by his friends, to go into the army or navy. But how many do we see every day, who are wished, and who consent readily, to enter into Christ's spiritual warfare, to become ministers of Christ's Gospel, while their minds are wholly disinclined to heavenly knowledge, and their hearts without any relish for heavenly love. This, assuredly, is an entering into the sheepfold by another way than by Christ, the door; it is a taking charge of the sheep, with the selfish feelings of the hireling, not with the zeal and affection of the good Shepherd.

But you are young yet, and you may hope, that before the time comes when you will actually enter on the ministry, you may have gained that desire to know and to do God's will, and to save the souls of others, which as yet you cannot pretend to feel. Then if you have this hope, do your best to realize it; if you think that God does call you into his service, live as worthy of that call: at school and at the university, if your friends' wishes and your own prepare you to enter hereafter into the ministry, see that you regard yourselves as vessels fashioned to honour, and to be preserved especially pure and bright for our heavenly Master's use. If you do so regard yourselves, and so strive to fit yourselves

for your heavenly profession, it may be, and I trust will, that in the call of outward circumstances, and the wishes of your friends, you may hereafter recognise the true call of God.

Thus, then, God calls you, at your age, especially, to improve yourselves in the studies placed before you ; and to consider in yourselves how you may best serve him hereafter, and in what particular way you may fit yourselves for his call to your several professions. The answer which you give to this call of God, and the punishment to which you render yourselves liable, will be the subject of my next sermon.

SERMON XIV.

LUKE xiv. 18.

They all with one consent began to make excuse.

So perfect is the truth of those descriptions of our nature which are to be found in the Scriptures ; so entirely do they seize those principal points which are applicable to all times and to all countries ; that when we quote them in reference to the common circumstances of our daily life, the effect is almost startling ; and it seems almost like an irreverent use of them, to bring them so closely in contact with our ordinary language and practices. But the fact is, that this wonderful capability of being brought home to common life, constitutes a great part of their perpetual value. The parable in the text was spoken immediately with reference to the various reasons which made the Jews in that day refuse God's call to enter into the kingdom of his Son. Yet so much is human nature the same from one age to another, and so exactly does the parable describe this nature, that the words of the text may just as fitly

be applied to ourselves. "They all with one consent began to make excuse." In which I shall note two things: first, the disobedience to the call of God; and then, the tendency to make excuses for that disobedience, by which, in fact, we condemn ourselves.

In my last sermon, I spoke of that particular call of God which is here addressed to you. We have all of us here assembled, our particular call relating to the several duties which our respective situations impose upon us. Do we not all of us too often refuse to listen to this call, and then make our disobedience worse by the vain excuses which we plead for it? I proceed to explain what I mean more particularly.

That the call *is* disobeyed is a matter of fact, of which our consciences cannot pretend to be ignorant. You are not fitting yourselves carefully and humbly for that state to which it may please God to call you; you are too many of you not bringing up to godliness and good learning. But the nature of the excuses given for not being so is well worthy of our consideration. I do not mean that these excuses are given outwardly to other persons; perhaps you would be ashamed so to state them: but they are, at any rate, excuses with which you cheat yourselves, and your own consciences, and remain satisfied with not doing what God requires of you.

One of these excuses arises out of a feeling that your common work is not a matter of religion ; and that, therefore, it is not sinful to neglect it. Idleness and vice are considered as two distinct things,—and it is very common to say, and to hear it said, of such an one, that he is idle, but that he is perfectly free from vice. It would, indeed, be using words contrary to their common meaning, if we did not make this distinction ; and it is true also, that a vicious boy is a great deal worse than an idle one, because he sins much more directly against his own conscience, and because, after all, it is worse to do evil than to leave good undone. But what is not vicious may yet be sinful ; in other words, what is not a great offence against men's common notions of right and wrong, may yet be a very great one against those purer notions which we learn from the Scripture, and in the judgment of the most pure God. Thus idleness is not vicious, perhaps, but it is certainly sinful,—and to strive against it is a religious duty, because it is highly offensive to God. This is so clearly shown in the parable of the ten talents, in that of the sower and the seed, and even in the account of the day of judgment, given by our Lord in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, that it cannot require a very long proof. In the parable of the talents, the whole offence of the servant, who is cast out into outer darkness,

consists in his not having made the most of the talent intrusted to him: in the parable of the sower, those soils are alike represented as bad, “which bring no fruit to perfection,”—whether the ground be overrun with thorns and briers, or whether it fail to produce any thing, from its mere shallowness and lightness. And in the description of the day of judgment, the sin for which the wicked are represented as turned into hell, is only that they had done no good. It is not mentioned that they were vicious, in the common sense of the word: but they were sinful, inasmuch as they had not done what God commanded them to do. And if it be said that this relates to the improvement of the heart, rather than of the understanding, and that though it may be a sin to neglect deeds of charity, it does not follow that it should be a sin to neglect working at books and tasks; the answer is, that it relates to neglecting the main duty of our lives, be it of whatever nature it may. If your principal work be of a different kind, show what it is, and let the fruit of it be seen; and if your lives are actively useful, if you are labouring in God’s service heartily, and if study be taken up merely as a recreation, as the amusement of your leisure hours,—then I do not deny but that very great ignorance and dislike to study may be faults of a much lighter character; it may be foolish rather

than sinful to indulge them. But as it is plain that you have no other principal duty but that of improving your minds,—as you have no other way in which you can bring forth fruit,—so it is plain, that to neglect this in you is the same sort of sin as if a king were to neglect the care of his people, or a minister of Christ the spiritual benefit of the congregation committed to his charge; the ground does not bring forth the fruit which the sower looks for; and it is, therefore, rejected and judged unprofitable.

Another excuse more nearly resembles the excuses made by the men in the parable:—you do not attend to the call of God, because there is some other call which you like better. You complain, or rather you say to yourselves, that the work is very irksome to you, and you cannot see the use of it. It is likely enough that the work is irksome; for so corrupt is our nature that God's will is generally irksome to us, because he is good and we are evil. The cultivation of your understandings is irksome to you; and be assured that you will find hereafter the cultivation of your spirits quite as irksome: neither the labours, indeed, of the body or the mind, can be compared to the long and painful struggles with our bad passions and moral corruptions,—with our pride, our lust, our covetousness, our worldly-mindedness. In doing God's will, and striving to

purify ourselves from these, there is enough that is irksome, and ever will be, to our natural inclinations and feelings. But is this such an excuse as God will allow for not doing what he has commanded us? Is it not here rather, that we should learn to practise our Saviour's command—"Let a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me?" What is denying ourselves, but doing what we do not like, because it is the will of our Master? What is to take up our cross daily, but to find and to bear daily some difficulty or other, some hindrance in ourselves or others, which besets and would close up our path of duty? But it may be said, and said truly, that we cannot go on for ever doing what is irksome to us; that we may try for a time, but to continue such painful efforts is absolutely impossible. It is so,—and what, then, is the consequence of this truth? The Apostle's words will tell us: "That which the law could not do, because it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He means, that the love of Christ, and the aid of his Spirit, make us able to do what of ourselves we could not do, because they help us to love what by nature we esteem but do not love. We all know, and some may remember the beautiful words

in which the heathen poet¹ has expressed the fact, that love makes the hardest task easy. Even so, he who loves God and Christ, finds in himself a stronger motive to please him, than his natural dislike to what is good: and though the struggle never ceases altogether till the day of the redemption of our bodies, yet the victory is no longer with sin, but with grace. The natural evil inclination, the weak and corrupt flesh, still finds duty painful; but the regenerate spirit, born again of the Spirit of God, and sharing in its Father's likeness, finds the will of its Father more pleasant than the flesh feels it painful: and so the will of God is done, and the man is redeemed from the bondage of sin and misery. This is the case with one duty as well as with another: whatever we have to do at God's call, which we find irksome to us, it is by the love of Christ, and by the help of his Spirit, that we shall find the pleasure greater than the pain. Therefore, against idleness, no less than against other sins, the Christian has the only sure means of victory: and he who lives without God in the world cannot be surprised if he finds his natural inclinations to evil too strong for any lower motives to conquer. Thus much for the excuse of the

¹ σκληρὰν μὲν, οἶδα, παιῖδες· ἀλλ' ἐν γὰρ μόνον
τὰ πάντα λύει ταῦτ' ἔπος μοχθήματα·
τὸ γὰρ φιλεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐξ ὅτου πλέον
ἢ τοῦδε τάνδρὸς ἔσχεθ', κ. τ. λ.

Sophocles, Œd. Colon. v. 1686. ed. Brunck.

irksomeness of your school duties : do them earnestly, and pray for God's help, and think what Christ has done for you, and what he promises to you ; and you will find that if idleness be sweet, the pleasure of doing the will of God, and keeping the commandments of Christ, is sweeter.

But you may say also, that you do not see the use of the work which you are employed in. This, too, is very likely ; and indeed, few but the oldest amongst you, or those endowed with the strongest natural abilities, and who have most carefully cultivated them, are capable as yet of seeing it. When our missionaries first introduced wheat into some of the South-sea islands, the natives who had been accustomed to get all their food from the roots of plants, and in a much quicker time than that in which wheat ripens, began, with great curiosity, after a certain time, to pluck up the corn, thinking that the root from which they doubted not but that the promised bread was to come, must, by this time, be quite ready to dig up. But when they found nothing at the root, and were told that they must wait some time longer, and would get their bread, after all, not from the root, but from a few little seeds, which, when ripe, must be ground into flour,—the thing was wholly beyond their comprehension ; and nothing but their strong faith in the superior knowledge and experience of the missionaries, prevented them

from pulling up the whole crop, as occupying the ground uselessly. So it is with the fruit of your studies here: it neither shows itself so soon as you expect, nor is it, after all, of the kind that you can now most readily understand; so that all that can be said to you is, work on in faith, as you must hereafter, even to the end of your lives, live by faith. Believe the experience and knowledge of others, who have lived to see the harvest, and who know and most deeply feel its value. But so far is true, that the fruit of your studies here will be absolutely nothing,—that the time spent upon them will be utterly lost, if you do not exert yourselves heartily, and enter into them with spirit. Nothing can be so useless as the peculiar studies of this place, if done in a bondman's temper,—if attended to only so far as you must, if learnt as lessons, with no efforts of your own to understand and enter into them. As I believe that nothing is more truly profitable to those who do enter into them thoroughly, so I am sure that nothing is a more complete waste of time to those who follow them carelessly, and take no pains of themselves about them.

But the subject seems as yet far from exhausted: for another, and a more common and more fatal excuse for neglecting God's call, still remains to be spoken of. Meanwhile, before I conclude for the present, one caution is most needful, not for

yourselves only, but for us also. It is impossible that you or we should be obeying Christ's call, if we neglect our peculiar duties here—the following up your studies diligently on your part, the directing and assisting them actively and zealously on ours. But it is very possible that both you and we should attend zealously to these duties, and yet not be obeying Christ's call either. Irksome as the studies of the school are to many, there are some well capable of enjoying them,—there are some who can share with us in the pleasures of extended knowledge, in the delights of an active exercise of the understanding. You too, and we, are liable to feel the excitement of praise and distinction; academical honours, and a high reputation, are objects sufficiently tempting to all of us. God grant that they may not be a snare to us,—that we may not make an idol of talent or knowledge,—that we may not desire to be clever, learned, and distinguished, rather than wise and good. I am sure that this is a danger against which we should pray earnestly, and watch carefully,—lest the fruit which we are rearing, like the fabled apples of Sodom, turn in our touch to rottenness. May God grant that we may all feel this, and whatever progress we may make, that we may consider it as worse than useless if it beguiles us from our Christian watchfulness, our dread of sin, and counting all things but loss in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

S E R M O N X V .

MATT. x. 36.

A man's foes shall be they of his own household.

IN my last sermon I spoke of two of those excuses which you sometimes make to your own consciences, for not obeying the particular calls which God here addresses to you. And I then said, that there yet remained another excuse, more common than the rest, and far more mischievous, which I proposed to consider on another occasion. It is, indeed, an excuse which is one of the strongest supports of the cause of Satan, an excuse which will never be laid aside till sin and death are put down for ever: and, indeed, if it did cease to influence men's minds, earth would be at once changed into something almost heavenly; the greatest part of the wickedness which infests it would be done away with altogether. I mean that excuse by which we either plead the example and authority of our neighbours for our doing

evil, or, for fear of their laughing at us and persecuting us, leave off to do good, and become even ashamed of appearing to care for it. In this state it may well be said, that “a man’s foes will be they of his own household;” that nothing is so dangerous to his salvation as the principles and practice of other men with whom he is living in daily intercourse, nothing so much to be feared, as that he should make their opinions his standard, instead of the declared will of God.

This is a subject on which I have spoken often before, and on which I may speak often again. I know not, indeed, to what congregation a Christian minister could make frequent addresses, without finding it expedient to dwell upon this most besetting danger: I am sure that here it might be made the daily subject of our warnings to you, and yet not be mentioned too frequently. It is not too much to say, that scarcely a single day ever passes without my seeing some instance of its fatal power: every day I observe some wickedness, or low principle or other, for which the ever-ready excuse would be, that every one else says or does the same. In proportion, therefore, to the strength and commonness of this feeling, must be the frequency and earnestness of my attacks upon it: as you are, too many of you, the veriest slaves of each other’s opinions, the veriest imitators of each other’s conduct, so I must try to rouse you to

something of a more independent feeling, and to break through that bondage which may most properly be called the bondage of sin and death.

Nothing, I suppose, shows the weakness of human nature more than this perpetual craving after some guide and support out of itself,—this living upon the judgment of others rather than on our own. And it is not to be disputed but that we do need a guide and support out of ourselves, if we would but choose the right one. All the idolatry in the world grew out of a just sense of human weakness: men looked at themselves and at the world around them; they felt how little they were, and by how much greatness they were surrounded; they saw how their bodies and their minds, their friends and their property, all the several elements of their happiness, were subjected to the control of causes wholly above their power to resist; and they turned, in their blindness, to worship every thing from whose influence upon their condition, whether for good or for evil, they had any thing to hope or to fear. This is the early form of idolatry, from the worship of the most glorious of God's creatures—the sun, and the moon, and the stars, to that of the vilest objects which have ever received the homage of a degraded superstition. But, in time, the progress of knowledge destroys this kind of idolatry, by explaining the causes of the most wonderful operations of nature, which

men had hitherto regarded with ignorant fear or wonder. Images of brass, and wood, and stone,—the sun and all the host of heaven,—are adored no longer: but the sense of human weakness still presses upon us, and, averse as we are to turning to our true Guide and Guardian, we only change the nature of our idolatry, and become idolaters of our fellow-men. Before their influence we bow down as blindly as our fathers did before their images of stone. But it is an influence far more mischievous, because it is a real one: men can express opinions, and enforce them; can encourage the pursuit of some objects, and chill all fondness for others; they can largely affect the happiness of our lives. Of this idol of civilized life its worshippers are apt to say, “Lo, he liveth, he eateth and drinketh: thou canst not say that he is no living God; therefore worship him.” They would persuade us, indeed, that there is no power in the universe so real; none which may so justly deserve our hopes and our fears. And we may think so, perhaps truly, if we once forget the Lord our God: for the mass of mankind cannot enter into the high feeling of the old philosophers; and if the divinity of our own minds were one that we might safely in any case worship, yet in too many instances the mind is so feeble, so little possessed of any attribute of divinity, that it were worse than madness to lean on a staff so rotten.

I hold it, therefore, to be certain, that in our days, and for the bulk of mankind, there is a choice of only two things: they must worship God, or one another; they must seek the praise and favour of God above all things, or the praise and favour of man. Being too weak to stand alone, they must lean upon the Rock of Ages, or upon the perishing and treacherous pillar of human opinion. This is the case with men, and this, in an equal or even in a greater degree, is the case with you.

But the evil here is particularly great, because the standard of excellence here approved of is so exceedingly false and low. It would be curious to gather and to record the several points in a character which boys respect and admire, in order to show what a crooked rule they walk by. In the true scale of excellence, moral perfection is most highly valued, then comes excellence of understanding, and, last of all, strength and activity of body. But at school this is just reversed. A strong and active boy is very much respected; a clever boy is also admired;—but a good and well-principled boy meets with very little encouragement. Again, natural abilities are admired and valued; but it is the tendency of many persons to admire them much less when united with sound sense and industry, than when they are to be found in one who does not cultivate them, but abuses them by his indolence, or by converting

them to some purpose of wickedness or folly. It is indeed remarkable, that nowhere else is the habitual breach of our duty so countenanced as it is here. A soldier, who was notoriously idle and cowardly, would not only be punished by his superiors, but would be an object of dislike and contempt to his comrades themselves. So it is with workmen : if a man works ill and lazily, it is not the way to gain credit with his companions any more than his employer. And this is but a natural feeling,—that it is disgraceful to do our business ill, let it be of what kind it may ; that it is contemptible either to be doing nothing, or to have an employment, and to neglect it. But here, on the contrary, idleness is with many rather a glory, and industry is considered as a reproach. When a boy first comes from home, full of the natural desire of doing his duty, of improving himself, and getting on well, he is presently beset by the ridicule of all the worthless and foolish boys around him, who want to sink him to their own level. How completely true is it, that his foes are they of his own household ;—that is, they who are most immediately about him, those of his own age, and his own place in the school. They become his idol : before their most foolish, most low, and most wicked voices, he gives up his affections, his understanding, and his conscience : from this mass of ignorance, and falsehood, and selfishness, he

looks for the guide of his opinions and his conduct. The strong language of scorn, with which the prophet describes the idolatry of old, may well be applied to this no less foolish and no less wicked idolatry of our own days: "He burneth part thereof in the fire, with part thereof he baketh bread, and the residue he maketh a god, even his graven image. A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, or say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" So it may be said of you,—You know what the idol is that you worship; you know how ignorant, how selfish, how unkind, often how false and how mean, are those boys whose ridicule you fear, and whose applause you covet. You know that in sickness, or in affliction, they are not the persons to whom you would go for comfort; you know, if you were to commit any offence against their notions of right and wrong, how little allowance they would make for you, how little compassion they would show for your distress. And yet, for the sake of the good opinion of persons such as these, or in order to avoid their ridicule, you would struggle to overcome your own best affections, you would harden your conscience, distress and displease your dearest earthly friends, and grieve the Spirit of God, who calls you to a better mind. You are bound by this fatal chain, "A deceived heart hath turned you aside, so that you cannot deliver your souls, or say,

Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Am I not sacrificing my happiness in earth and heaven to a lying spirit, which calls evil good, and good evil: which puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter?

But where the terror of ridicule does not act to make you do what you know to be wrong, yet the low standard of right and wrong which exists among you is sometimes mischievous to those, who in many respects think and act above it, by furnishing them with an excuse for indulging occasionally in some convenient but unworthy practice. It is then so natural an excuse to deceive our conscience, that we are but doing what every one else does, that we are but doing what no one else considers to be wrong. We make it a sort of merit, that in general we do follow a higher standard; and, on the strength of this, we think ourselves entitled to follow the lower one sometimes, when we are particularly tempted to do so. I could imagine, that St. James had had much experience of people of this description, from several passages in his epistle. 'Those double-minded men whom he bids to purify their hearts, and whom he tells not to think that they shall receive any thing of the Lord; those whom he reminds, that "to him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin;"—they apparently were persons who lived in general far above the heathen standard, who

only wished to keep in reserve some few convenient points on which they might gratify their evil inclinations, and say in their excuse, that no one else thought there was any harm in such things. They thought and knew that there was harm in them, for their eyes had been opened by Gospel light, and they would be judged by their own knowledge, and not by their neighbour's ignorance. Vain, therefore, is the attempt to serve God and mammon together; to reconcile the low standard of your companions, with that purer and higher one with which it has been your happiness to be made acquainted—your happiness, if not almost only but altogether you become conformed to it; or else, not your happiness, but your certain and most just condemnation.

One thing in which this low standard fearfully shows itself, I cannot but take this occasion of mentioning. I have observed, from time to time, that the sin of falsehood is not considered among you so hateful as Christ teaches us to regard it; or even as the common notions of worldly honour, in this respect most true in their judgment, estimate it amongst men in the world. It is really awful to witness the quantity of direct falsehood, of equivocation, unfair concealment, false representations, and all the train of similar wickednesses, of which too many of you continually allow yourselves to be guilty. Your aim seems to be, not to tell the truth,

but to steer dexterously between the truth and a lie. And this is as foolish as it is wicked. It is impossible to steer between them : for he who once allows himself any other object than the truth,—who suffers himself to try to make his neighbour believe something which is not exactly the real fair state of the case,—is already a liar in his heart. The real guilt of falsehood consists in the attempt to disguise the truth ; that is, to deceive : and it matters not by what form of words this object is effected : whether it be by equivocating, or concealing, or misrepresenting, or by direct lying. It is the truth that God loves, and which is the peculiar glory of the Gospel ; insomuch that St. Paul twice notices, as the first mark of a converted heart, that putting away lying, we should “speak every one truth with his neighbour ; for we are members one of another.” And this you are all taught at home : from your earliest childhood you have known the wickedness of falsehood, the duty of absolute sincerity and truth. But here you find another standard, which tells you that it is fair to deceive and lie to serve your own turn, at least when you are speaking to a master. You let this false standard lead you away from your duty to God and man ; you make it your idol, and fall down and worship it, and sacrifice to it every thing that ought to be most precious, even your own souls, which Christ died to save.

For a short time, this fatal spell will now be taken off from you ; for a few weeks you will breathe in a purer air, and be subjected, I trust, to a gentler and a holier influence. Some, nay many, and I hope most of you, will see in your own homes examples of a very different kind ; will hear there a very different language from what they have seen and heard around them here. The evil spirit will leave his hold for a time, and you may breathe and speak in freedom. But remember that he will surely return again : a few short weeks, and we shall be met here once more, and the same temptations will be again besetting you. Would that you would use the precious interval that is now granted to you ! Would that some of you, whose principles have been somewhat stained, and their practice corrupted, during the last five months, may purify yourselves from these soils ; may refresh and strengthen your fainting spirits with a new draught of the well of everlasting life ! And I will add our Lord's solemn words to Peter : " Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not ; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." If Satan has desired to have you, and if his desire has been in part fulfilled,—if you have been tempted, like Peter, to deny your Saviour, yet that same Saviour, who prayed for Peter, prays for you also, that your faith

may not fail finally. Remember, too, and strive that his last words also may apply to you—"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." You are not called to an inactive state; you cannot serve Christ in secret, when his enemies are loud in denying him. You must confess him before men, even at the risk of being put out of the synagogue; that is, of being laughed or reviled out of their society: still you must confess him, and not be ashamed of his Gospel. But yet there is a comfort for you, that may lawfully encourage you. They who were put out of the synagogue, who were persecuted and reviled everywhere for preaching the Gospel of Christ; they lived to see the day when the kingdom of Christ was greatly multiplied, and the synagogue of the Jews sunk before it. What if this be, in part at least, your case; if, by firmness, by union amongst yourselves,—(for they who feared the Lord, in the midst of wickedness, were wont to speak often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it,)—by patient continuance in well-doing, and by a Christian prudence, teaching you not to disfigure your profession by any needless severity or by folly,—you could not only save yourselves from being corrupted, but turn back the torrent of evil upon itself, and win others from the service of Satan to join with you? What, if owing to your efforts, always in the strength, and with your sole trust in your Saviour's aid, it should be

no more reckoned excusable to lie or to equivocate, no more thought honourable to be idle, no more thought poor-spirited to walk stedfastly in the path of duty? Even this is not beyond hope, if we all of us here assembled, who do love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,—you in your station, and your teachers in theirs,—labour, with all holy diligence, to advance Christ's kingdom. But if not,—if this be denied you,—and if you must still have to struggle against triumphant evil,—still remember whose arm will never fail you, and think of that hour when the triumph will surely be your own to all eternity. Think of the blessedness of being confessed by Christ before his Father, and the holy angels, because you in the world had confessed him. Think of the glory of receiving such praise as the most sublime of poets has expressed, in a strain not surely uninspired by that “Eternal Spirit” whose aid he had sincerely sought—

“Servant of God! well done! well hast thou fought
The better fight, who singly hast maintained
Against revolted multitudes the cause
Of Truth, in word mightier than they in arms:
And, for the testimony of truth, hast borne
Universal reproach, far worse to bear
Than violence:—for this was all thy care,
To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds
Judged thee perverse.”

SERMON XVI.

JOHN xiii. 13, 14.

*Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am.
If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet ;
ye ought also to wash one another's feet.*

OF all the words and actions of our Lord that have been recorded in the Gospels, there is none, perhaps, more remarkable, none more unlike every other system of morals with which we are acquainted, than the action alluded to in the text. It was done deliberately and purposely for our instruction ; to leave us a lesson of a particular kind, such as Christ well knew that we most needed. Indeed, it is a lesson which we all need, the old and the young alike ; we need it at every time of life, we need it at every age of the world, we need it in every condition of society : but yet, if there be one period of life, one age of the world, one country, and one particular condition, in which it be particularly wanted, I may say with truth that yours is that period of life, and that ours is that age of the world, that country, and that condition.

Some of you have heard me, on other occasions, dwell on the fearful contrast between the effects which Christianity ought to have produced, and which are spoken of in Scripture as its natural consequences, and those which have actually flowed from it. Our Saviour said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one towards another." This love of one another was to be the mark and seal of Christians; it was to distinguish them from other men; so that those who were not Christians, looking upon their lives, and seeing them free from the jealousies, the quarrels, the violent and bad passions of other men, might confess that God was in them of a truth, and that so heavenly a fruit could proceed from nothing else than the tree of life eternal. Now, if we look through history, or if, without going to books, we look round upon our own neighbourhood,—nay, even if we come still closer home, and look round our own household, upon those with whom we eat and drink daily at the same table,—nay, if coming nearer still, we look upon our very own relations, the parents, the wives and husbands, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, between whom love might surely be expected to reign,—what is the sight that we shall witness? But better and more fitting is it to look into one place which will speak more clearly and certainly to us than all the rest:

let us each look into our own hearts, and ask our consciences what we find there. Alas, my brethren, if he only dwelleth in God who dwelleth in love, surely we are not in God, nor God in us. Even the kindest and most benevolent of us all, they in whom, to the eyes of others, nothing ungente, nothing uncharitable is visible,—even with them the heart knoweth his own bitterness; they know—and God, who is greater than their heart, knoweth also—how much that is harsh, and selfish, and violent, and unkind, mingles itself with their inmost spirit; how far they are distant from that perfect love with which God loved us, and with which we ought also to love one another.

But the text speaks of one particular kind of love more especially, — the love of our poorer brethren. It must have been a solemn lesson which our Lord chose to teach so earnestly on that last night of his presence with his disciples; and which he not only gave in words, but expressed it in a most significant action, to impress it the deeper on their minds and ours. Observe the connexion of the words of the Evangelist: “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God:” what did he upon this knowledge? Did he reveal to them some high mysteries concerning the divine nature, such as kings, and prophets, and sages had long desired to learn? No:

“he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” This was what Jesus did, “knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God.” Surely no diviner comment could be given upon the words of the Scriptures, that “God is love, and he who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him!” A command so given and so enforced must surely have been of the deepest importance : “If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another’s feet.”

I call this text a command to one particular kind of love, “the love of our poorer brethren.” It is sometimes said, that it was a command to practise humility : and so it was in one sense of the word ; but they who so explain it, deprive it of a great portion of its peculiar value. Our Lord taught humility, in the common sense of the term, when he took a child, and set him in the midst of his disciples, and said, “Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” But it is manifest that by washing his disciples’ feet, and telling them that they ought also to wash one another’s feet, he did not mean exactly the same thing as this. His

meaning was, to enforce not so much a sacrifice of pride, as of luxurious and careless selfishness ; to teach us to do, not those things which it was humiliating, but which it was troublesome, unpleasant, and disagreeable to do ; that is, precisely, to perform duties of kindness, even to the most humble sort, to those who need them the most,—not to shrink from the meanest offices in visiting and relieving the bodily wants and sufferings of the poor.

If there were nothing else, I am sure that the unwillingness with which we hear this command, and our anxiety to affix another meaning to it, would alone show how much we require it. It is, too, I am sure, particularly needed by us who are here assembled. The duties of attending on sickness are so much more familiar to women, even of every condition, and there is so much more of the kindness required for them in woman's nature than in man's, that it is our own sex, in particular, and, above all, our own station in society, that needs this lesson. To us the abodes of the poor, and still more their sick-beds, are a sight with which we are but little acquainted :—in fact, our knowledge of the poor, that is, of the largest portion of our Christian brethren living immediately around us, is next to nothing. And it is chiefly from this ignorance, I think, that our feelings and relations towards the poor altogether are so

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thoroughly unchristian. You well know how early you learn to call every one belonging to the poorer classes by a contemptuous name, by which you distinguish them from those belonging to the richer classes. It is very true that all who use this name do not intend any insult by it;—they use it without thinking of its meaning, just as men commonly swear and use profane language, without meaning or considering what they are saying. Yet, as no man of habitual piety will be found to swear, so I am inclined to think that no one who felt a Christian kindness towards the poor, who lived in the daily recollection of what they were and what he himself was, would ever speak of them by that insulting name to which I have alluded. And be assured of this, that our words have an insensible but certain effect upon our feelings, even when used most carelessly. From always hearing the poor spoken of, from always speaking of them yourselves by this name, you get habitually to think meanly of them, to look upon them almost as a different race, between whom and yourselves there is a wide gulf fixed, so wide as to cut off all sympathy. Meantime, those of the poor with whom you do become personally acquainted, are persons of whom you cannot but think meanly, although you ought to consider how much of what you despise in them is merely owing to your own encouragement. If I were to go through a list of the

most respectable poor families in this place, few of you, I am afraid, would know any thing about them;—but if I were to name those persons who are least respectable, your knowledge of them, I fear, would be far more intimate. So again I have been more than once struck by observing how much eagerness many of you have shown in giving things to beggars, evidently of the very most undeserving sort, because they amused you by their tricks and buffoonery; while the same hands, which were so lavish to the worthless, had, perhaps, never learnt to relieve the real necessities of the honest and uncomplaining. Nor let it be thought that these are little things, unfit to be spoken of in the house of God. It is a most vain superstition, and most mischievous, as all superstition ever is, to think that the mention of little common things is unworthy of this holy place, when out of these little things our hearts and lives are daily forming into a fitness for eternal happiness or eternal misery. The things of which I have now spoken,—that contemptuous word by which you call the poor,—that want of acquaintance with the respectable among them,—that familiarity with the profligate, that encouragement given to the idler who makes beggary his trade,—that neglect of those real sufferers, in whose persons Christ himself vouchsafes to ask our charity; all these things help to form that disposition towards the poor in after life, from which our

country is at this moment so fearfully suffering. It is not hard-heartedness—much less is it wilful oppression,—but it is an absence of that true feeling of Christian brotherhood which Christ's words in my text inculcate: "Ye call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you ought also to wash one another's feet." It is those little words, "one another," which express so much, and which we are so apt to lose sight of. These words show, that the rich and the poor are members one of another, not two distinct castes,—I had almost said two distinct races. These words ought to take away that feeling of merit which we are but too apt to attach to our charity. No man is proud of being kind to his brother or his near friend; he would only be ashamed of himself if he were not kind. So, if we felt aright to the poor, that they are, in the highest of all relations, our brethren,—children of the same heavenly Father, called all alike brethren by Him who, having taken part of our flesh and blood, was not ashamed to call all God's earthly children by that name; if we so felt, should we not, indeed, think that the words, "one another," might well describe the relations of the rich and the poor; should we not fully enter into the spirit of the Apostle's words: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another?"

But, in conclusion, I must remember that after hearing all that I have said, the practical question may yet be asked, "What must we do?" How can we, each of us, bring home to ourselves the lesson which Christ teaches us? You can do it by leaving off what is contrary to it, at any rate; by ceasing from words which are contemptuous and insulting to the poor; by breaking off familiarity, by forbearing to encourage that unworthy portion of the poor, who are likely to give you a most unjust and hard impression of the whole body. But I am sure many amongst you, to say the least, must have opportunities of doing much more. Many amongst you must have poor neighbours around you at home, from whom you may learn what poverty is, how great, how awful a claim it has upon all, and much more than all that we can do for it. Many amongst you must have friends who would be delighted to encourage you in the disposition to know the poor, and to love them; and whose experience would teach you how to avoid all extravagance and folly, which an ignorant zeal will naturally fall into. But it were foolish, in this case, to dread the effects of over zeal; much more is it to be dreaded, that there should be no zeal at all; that your holidays should be devoted only to your own pleasure; that, amidst the joyousness and festivities with which wealth surrounds itself at this coming Christmas season,

you should bestow no thought on that large body of your neighbours to whom Christmas is only a season of suffering, a season of cold, and darkness, and dreariness. If such be the case, it is most awful to think that a curse is on all our enjoyments ; that our mirth and our festivity are but those of the rich man in the parable, who, when he died and was buried, found himself instantly in eternal torments, and was told that all the good things which he could expect throughout eternity, he had already received : all good was gone, and all evil was in store for him for ever. May God give us a better mind,—better for the worldly comfort of others, much more, infinitely better for the eternal welfare of our own souls.

SERMON XVII.

REV. xxii. 10—12.

And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book : for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still : and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still : and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still : and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

So much presses upon the mind in reading these verses, that I hardly know how to put in order, or how to limit within any fit bounds, the various thoughts which they suggest. There is so much in the separate parts of them, and so much in them when taken together ; there is so much in the particular time at which they were written, and in the very place which they hold in the volume of the Scriptures, that they seem better fitted to be the subject of a course of sermons, than to furnish matter for one only.

The place which they hold in the volume of the New Testament must strike the most careless observer. If you open your Bibles, you will find them in the last page of the last book of the whole Scriptures. All the books in the Bible are by no means placed in the order in which they were written; but it happens that the Book of the Revelation, as it stands the last, so was it written the last: since that time, the book of the Holy Scriptures has received no other addition. And further, this Book of the Revelation was written in the last years of the life of the last Apostle who had received the Holy Ghost, in a special manner, for teaching with authority the things of the kingdom of God. Christianity had received its appointed signs, and no more were to be vouchsafed to it: all truth necessary to salvation had been once taught by men speaking what the Holy Ghost inspired, and such infallible teaching was from henceforth to be no more repeated. When Christ ascended into heaven, the Comforter descended in his place; and although God was no longer personally visible, yet the mighty works which the Apostles wrought through his aid, and the knowledge of things kept secret from the foundation of the world, which they derived from the teaching of his Spirit, made the presence of God among them no less manifest to the world, than when Christ had been with them in the body.

But now, when the last Apostle was on the point of being called to his Lord, Christianity seemed completely to be launched upon the ocean of the world, to struggle against all the storms which might assail it. In that full sense in which Christ had foretold it, he was now to be manifested only to those who loved him; for the rest, neither sign nor wonder, nor teaching of infallible truth and unalloyed wisdom, would be granted to them any more. Behold us here, then, still in this state in which the Church of Christ for more than seventeen centuries and a half has been striving,—still seeing no sign from heaven,—still vainly seeking amidst our difficulties and doubts for any living voice of infallible wisdom—yet still with heaven and hell close beside us every hour,—still the servants of Christ, whether we choose to follow him or no, and reserved to stand, whether living or dead, before his judgment-seat at his coming.

Let us listen then, and bear ever with us in our inmost hearts the last words spoken by our Lord, when he committed his Church to its season of trial: “The time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Observe he says, the

“time is at hand,” and “I come quickly,” although in the preceding prophecy the course of trials to which the Church would be exposed, is described as running through a long succession of ages. Undoubtedly to every reader of these words in every age, the time is at hand, and his Lord is coming quickly—his own time of watching, of trial, and of temptation, is passing away with every hour; and the longer we live, the shorter seems the period which we have lived through, and the space between our life and our death seems continually a more insignificant point in the midst of eternity. The use of the consideration of Christ’s coming speedily, is to encourage the patient, and to give a timely warning to the careless; and for this purpose the speediness of our own departure from this world is the same as if the world itself were within a few years to perish. But the more literal sense of the words of the text seems to imply that the end of the world was near at hand, when compared with the period that had elapsed since its first creation. Whether this be so or not, is certainly far beyond the reach of human foresight: but the exceeding rapidity with which society has been moving forwards in the last three centuries, seems to show that man’s work of replenishing the earth must, in the common course of things, be accomplished before much more than two thousand

years from the time of Christ's first coming shall have passed away.

But leaving this, let us consider the words left us for our instruction during the time that Christ is absent from us, be that time of greater or of less duration. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Every year that we live, these words seem to me to acquire a more awful meaning. When we see iniquity abounding and faith waxing cold,—when we see the most monstrous doctrines of ungodliness and wickedness uttered boldly in the very face of heaven,—we are apt to be surprised and somewhat disappointed that God does not at once assert his majesty, and that vengeance does not yet burst forth upon those who seem to delight in braving it. It is the impatient spirit with which the servants in the parable wanted at once to go and gather up the tares which the enemy had mingled with the good seed. But the answer given by their lord is substantially the same with the words of the text: "Let both grow together until the harvest." "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still." God will not interfere with any show of his almighty power, either to convert the one, or to encourage the other. Once he has declared himself, and given to the world visible signs of his inter-

ference; but he does so now no more. Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the world; wickedness often prospers, and goodness is often oppressed: it seems as though God had left them both to stand or fall by their own efforts; and the only reason to make a man follow either good or evil, is because he loves the one in his heart and hates the other. He that loves evil may go on unchecked and unterrified; he who loves good must love it for itself, or must follow it by faith in what he hopes will be hereafter, though he can see no signs of it at present.

It cannot be too often repeated,—and never was the lesson more needed than at this hour,—that it is nothing but a thorough love of righteousness and goodness that can, with the blessing of God, keep our faith alive. To a good man, the evidence of the Gospel is abundantly satisfactory; to a bad man, it seems to have no force at all. Unless our principles support our faith, our faith will not long uphold our principles. In times of outward peace, such as those which we have long experienced, nothing is more common than to see men of unholy lives, and with no real love of goodness, not only loud in their profession, but undisturbed in the belief of Christianity. Attacks upon their faith do not come in their way, or if they do, they are made only by a small and inconsiderable party, and are urged weakly and ignorantly. In this state

of things, the defenders of Christianity have the public voice on their side ; their arguments are applauded, and their victory is really complete ; for it is gained over adversaries whose blows have been struck timidly and blindly, who have fought under the disadvantage of having the general feeling against them. But in times of another kind, when the general feeling becomes divided, and the cause of Christianity has lost many of its artificial supports, nothing will support our faith effectually, but a real and earnest love of its principles, and a lively hatred of every thing that is evil. When unbelief, instead of being received with general abhorrence, becomes generally fashionable,—when our profession of faith loses that confidence which is given by seeing that the majority are on its side,—then a man must begin in earnest to examine his own foundations,—to look for a stay within him, when outward aids begin to fall away. Woe to him in that moment, if his support be only intellectual,—if he relies alone on the books or the arguments which he had been used to consider all-triumphant. Many of my present hearers require to be warned on this point most earnestly. The question between Christianity and unbelief is now assuming a form essentially different from that which it wore in the last century ; and thus the popular books of evidences are becoming daily more insufficient to

meet the arguments and objections with which you will now, on your entrance into the world, find your faith assailed. Most of the books of evidences which you have read are directed against deists, that is, against persons who professed that they believed in God, but did not believe in his Son, Christ Jesus. Against deists and their arguments, the books I allude to (Butler, for instance, and Leslie) are, indeed, quite triumphant; but the battle is now fought upon different grounds, and you will be attacked, either by those who would represent everything as doubtful, and who, having no opinions of their own to defend, avail themselves of that weakness of the human mind, which suffers its doubts to disturb the tranquillity of its knowledge; or else, by those who say at once, that there is no God, and that our life will utterly and eternally perish with the decay of our mortal bodies. And this last opinion, as it is one which, to a good man, would bring distraction of mind little short of madness, so it is one which, to a bad man, the deeper he advances in wickedness, will become constantly more probable and more natural. God does, indeed, send on such persons strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, because they loved not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. And the beginnings of this fearful state, this sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness, are nearer at hand to

us, perhaps, than we are disposed to fancy. He who indulges violent passions, who permits himself to return evil for evil,—to despise the notion of forgiving from the heart those who have done him wrong,—he is becoming ready to wish that the Gospel were not true, and, as he who denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father, he is becoming ready to wish, and if to wish, he will soon assuredly believe, that there is no judgment at all, and no God. Or, again, he who commits fornication, or any other sensual sin,—who endeavours to cheat himself with the notion that these things are of no great consequence,—he soon learns to hate the Gospel, which declares that no fornicator or unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ or of God; and from hating he soon comes to disbelieve, and to deny both the Son and the Father. Or still, again, he who from strong natural powers and lively spirits, is disposed to think too highly of himself,—who seldom knows what it is to feel reverence or admiration, and far less to feel humility,—he cannot bear Christianity, which exalts God so highly, and teaches man that he can only be exalted by humbling himself;—with him the notions of independence, and vigour, and power, and courage of mind, are as fatal as a violent nature or a sensual nature in the other cases that I have described; and the man becomes colder, and harder, and prouder, and more igno-

rant of himself, till he reverences nothing, admires nothing, and loves nothing but himself and his own mind. All these are roads to atheism; and if any man will follow them far enough, he will surely become an atheist, although he may read ever so constantly, and be unable to answer the arguments which have been drawn for the being and attributes of God. So it is, “he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” When arguments for atheism are brought forward, nothing seems to me so decisive against them, as this certain fact,—that the surest way to make them seem convincing to our minds, is to plunge as deeply as possible into wickedness. Any man may easily and certainly become an atheist if he will but reject all good practices, all self-examination, all scruple of crime, and do the bidding of the devil without reserve.

On the contrary, “he that is holy, let him be holy still.” He too will grow steadier and steadier in his faith, in proportion as he dreads sin more, and is more watchful over his life, and heart, and temper, and learns to deny himself, and to love his neighbour, and thus becomes more and more conformed to the Spirit of God. To him God manifests himself, not by signs of his power, not by pouring irresistible conviction upon his under-

standing, but by speaking in the still small voice of peace, and hope, and love unfeigned, by giving him already an earnest of that blessed state of mind, which they who see God and live in him, continually and of necessity enjoy. Truly "he will be holy still," let the temptations and difficulties and dangers of his course be what they may. His thought is still, "Lord, to whom but thee shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. With thee, and with those who have followed thee, I will gladly stake my hopes for this world, and for eternity: I desire nothing but to follow in thy steps here, and, if it may be, through thy blood shed for my manifold sins and imperfections, to be where thou art hereafter. Nature may sometimes be impatient, may think that thy coming is too long delayed, may wish to exchange faith for sight, and hope for enjoyment. I may say, indeed, Come, Lord Jesus; for such are the words of thy church, the bride, and of thy Spirit, which teaches the church what to wish and to pray for. But if thou still lingerest, let me wait in patience thy time, and occupy myself the while steadily in thy service. There is enough for me, and for every one of thy true servants, to do upon earth: do thou guide us, and strengthen us, and give us an undying zeal for the work. There are wants to be relieved, bodily and spiritual; ignorance to be enlightened; falsehood and wickedness to be reproved;

truth to be upheld, defended, and declared. Grant that every year of life there may be some such blessed fruit of our labour: yet grant also, that we do not magnify ourselves in our own works; that we rejoice, not because the devils are subject to us, but because thou hast loved us, and hast written our names in heaven, and wilt bring us through thy grace to thy own eternal mansion with the Father.”

SERMON XVIII.

JOHN xiii. 10.

He that is washed, needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

HARDLY, since the very earliest days of the Gospel, could these words have been repeated with exactly the same truth to any assembly of Christians. In saying to his disciples, “Ye are clean, but not all,” our Lord declared, that the clean were by far the greater number amongst them, although there was one single person who was an exception. Eleven of those who heard him were pronounced to be clean, while one only was found wanting. What a state of almost heavenly blessedness should we think it now, if, when looking round upon any number of persons assembled in any Christian place of worship, we could persuade ourselves that eleven out of every twelve were such as Christ would pronounce to be clean!—not indeed free from sin, and far less

removed above the reach of temptation ; but yet so sound in principle, so sincere in their love of Christ, that they would need only to wash the feet,—to cleanse themselves from the common and almost necessary stains which daily life brings with it ; and would then be accounted by Christ to be “ clean every whit.” Surely, when we look around on what men are, we should think that our lot was thrown in a most happy ground, if not eleven out of every twelve, but even one half of those whom we met in the house of God, could be thought such as Christ would call “ clean.”

The words of the text were spoken by our Lord just before he was beginning the season of his sufferings, and only a few hours before he was crucified. His disciples were all around him, and one of them said, that he was ready to go with his Master into prison and to death. The words were spoken in entire sincerity, and, therefore, Christ declared, that he who spoke them was clean, although he knew that when the trial came they would not be fulfilled in practice. Even so we are here assembled at the beginning of the week in which we celebrate the memory of our Lord’s sufferings, and only a few days before the time when we shall be invited to partake of his most blessed body and blood, in the sacrament of the holy communion. May we

suppose Christ speaking to us as he did to his Apostles; could we hope that he would say to us, “Ye are clean, but not all;” although some few of you may be lost, yet by far the greater number are my true disciples, and will follow me whithersoever I go?” Or would he rather speak to us in the language which he himself foretold would be most fitting for the latter days, —“When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?” Our own consciences will be able best to tell us; if we examine a little what it was in our Lord’s Apostles which made him say to them, that, with one exception, they were all clean.

We have said already, that it certainly was not because they were free from sin altogether. The Gospels contain many instances of faults, even amongst the most eminent of their number, which prove quite clearly that they were far from perfect. There are marks of ambition, of violence, of worldly-mindedness in their characters, which on different occasions drew forth our Lord’s reproof. But yet he calls them “clean,” because, as he said to them, that very same evening, “Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations.” They were men, who, when many others had gone back and walked no more with him, and when they themselves did not understand aright those

words of their Lord which had given so much offence, yet replied to him, when he asked them, "Will ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." He calls them "clean," therefore, because their faith in him had not failed; but they had continued with him in all his temptations, and loved him better than any other service.

If this is the case, then, we may think at first sight, that we too are all clean, because our faith in Christ has never failed us, and we have continued in his service ever since we were born. And so, indeed, we might think justly, if our notions of faith were the same as those of the Scripture. True it is, that none of us, perhaps, have ever doubted the fact of our Lord's resurrection; but it is, I fear, no less true, that many of us have, in the scripture sense of the word, never believed it; and I will go even further, and say, that many who have doubted the fact, even in the very moment of their doubting, have shown more of Christian faith than many who never doubted it at all. This sounds like a paradox; but it is a plain and certain truth to those who are familiar with the Scriptures on one side, and have ever watched the workings of their own hearts on the other. Many have

doubted it, like the Apostle Thomas in the Gospel, from their exceeding wish to find it true; they believe not for very joy. Alive to their own sins,—alive to the utter darkness of all beyond the grave, without the aid of revelation,—alive to the surpassing wisdom and excellence of the great revelation of God in Christ Jesus,—it is almost too good to be hoped for, that, for all they most lament and shrink from, there should be so perfect a remedy,—that all, and more than all, that their fondest imaginations could picture, of good and excellent, should be a real and sober truth. Surely all those who know the Gospel and the nature of man, would pray earnestly that thousands who never have doubted of Christ's resurrection, might doubt of it this instant, so that they might have with their doubt so much of a real Christian faith,—a heart and mind so much in agreement with the mind of the Spirit of God. On the other hand, and this is to our present purpose most particularly, it does not at all follow that they who do not doubt, therefore believe. Taught the facts of our religion from childhood,—taught to consider them as very certain and very sacred, but too often not taught how to use them,—the events of Christ's life and death have no more occupied their hearts and minds than the movements of the sun, and moon, and stars: as far as practice

is concerned, they think of the one no more than they do of the other. As children, they have said their Catechism as a lesson,—as boys, they have gone to church, when at home, because it is the custom of their families, and when at school, because the rules of the school oblige them to do so. But neither the Catechism nor the church service have gone beyond the particular portion of time—I may almost say, the particular part and corner of the mind—that has been given to them. They have never fully entered into the system, so as visibly to affect the health and strength of the constitution. It is possible that, in many cases, a boy knows nothing of what may be called faith, till he begins to prepare for confirmation. But it is possible also that even that solemn service, admirable as is its design, and great as are its uses, if understood and applied, may pass over to some unprofitably. They may look upon it as a sort of examination in divinity, and think that if they can answer the questions put to them, so as to be reported fit for confirmation, in point of knowledge, they have done their business, and are qualified for the ceremony; and, after it is over, they look upon it as on an examination when past, as a thing with which they have no further concern. Then comes the preparation, for the first time, of receiving the communion of

the Lord's supper : and this, perhaps, is the first time that some have ever acquired a notion of what Christian faith really is. And for this very reason, because there is a general feeling, that the receiving of the sacrament is different from our common religious services, that it cannot be trifled with in the manner in which we know that we do trifle with those other services ;—it is, in short, because the sacrament does really require faith, and faith is a thing which our evil nature knows not and shrinks from,—that therefore we so often find young persons so unwilling to come to the Lord's table. Nay, sometimes, even if they do receive it, they do not yet learn fully what it is to believe. So manifold are the tricks of our self-deceiving hearts, that some go to the communion itself as a matter of form, because they think that it would be marked in them to stay away ; and then they try to persuade themselves that they cannot help going ; and if they cannot help going, then they do not profane it by going unworthily ; — that it is not their own free choice to go, and the guilt of profaning it will not rest upon their heads. Strange and shocking as it seems, I *know* that this argument has been used where the rules of a school or college have required every one to attend as a matter of regulation ;—I fear it may have been used even where no such rule

exists, and where it can only be supposed that an habitual absence from the communion, in persons of a certain age, cannot fail to be remarked as strange, and as a just matter of regret. But so it is, that from whatever cause,—whether from wilful neglect before they went, or more commonly from inveterate carelessness afterwards,—too many of those, who do attend the communion, still appear to be strangers to the principle of faith. They cannot be said, like the Apostles, to “have continued with Christ in his temptations,” for they have never known what it is to struggle against temptation for Christ’s sake. They have never made it their deliberate choice to abide with him, let who would forsake him, because they were sure that he had “the words of eternal life.” As to leaving him outwardly,—that is, of changing their religion, and becoming heathens and Mahometans,—that is a question which has never come before their minds, as there is nothing to tempt them to do it; but, as to leaving him really, that is to say, ceasing to obey him, to honour him, to love him, they do not *cease* to do these things, only because they have never *begun* to do them at all; they do not turn back from Christ, only because they have never really followed him. However much then we may be called Christians, and however little we have ever doubted the fact of Christ’s life and death, we cannot on that account lay claim to that

true and lively faith which Christ saw in his eleven Apostles, and for which he did not hesitate to pronounce them to be “clean every whit.”

But what follows then? If we are not thus clean,—if we have need of far more than a partial washing,—are we in the condition of our Lord’s twelfth disciple, of whom it is said, that he was the son of perdition, and that when his hand was on the table of Christ, it was the hand of one who was betraying his Master?—God forbid! much rather may we hope that it may be said of us, that we are not far from the kingdom of God, even if we are not yet spiritually entered into it. We are not clean, indeed, too many of us; but that Gospel which is preached unto us,—that Gospel whose great and most solemn completion we this week celebrate,—holds out to you and to me, to every one of the children of men who need it, a fountain for sin and for uncleanness—a means whereby our sins, though scarlet, may be made as white as snow, and we, like the Apostles, may stand in the sight of God as “clean every whit.” The Gospel is “Christ crucified;” the power of God, and the wisdom of God; power to root out the most hardened evils of our nature,—wisdom to give even to babes a knowledge beyond all that earthly learning could ever acquire or teach. “Christ crucified” is this week more especially set forth before us: would to God that you and I, and

all that in name belong unto him, might so dwell with humble and penitent hearts upon that solemn story, that, when we meet in this place next Sunday, we might be able, with something of a fitting joy, to celebrate and give thanks to "Christ risen." How often have we lived over this week of our Lord's passion, and felt no grief and no repentance: how often have we attended his service on Easter-day and felt no joy. I speak not of the observance of these particular days for any especial sacredness in themselves; one week in itself is but like another: but I speak of the opportunity which it offers; I speak of the necessity, if we ever hope to see God, of feeling at some one time or other of our lives what is contained in those few words, "Christ crucified, and Christ risen;" of letting our minds embrace the reason why he was crucified, and for what he rose; of learning what it is to be a sinner, and what it is to stand acquitted before the throne of God, forgiven and beloved. This is faith,—and by this, and this alone, can we ever be acquitted, or ever overcome the world. We may have a deep knowledge of divinity,—still more may we have a deep knowledge of earthly things;—we may have many qualities which our friends dearly love, many which even our enemies cannot refuse to honour;—we may live in comfort, with large enjoyment of the pleasures of sense, the pleasures of under-

standing, and the delights of affection, and our names may be repeated in after times as men who did worthily in their generation to their neighbours and their country;—all this may be; and yet we may awake from our graves, when earth falls in ruin around us, and hear from Him, whom we must hear as a Judge, though we may reject him as a Saviour, that we have had our reward,—that in our lifetime, or at least in earth's lifetime, we have received our good things, and that the cup is now empty for ever. All will have passed away, as a thousand worlds, with all their interests and pleasures, may have passed away already, in infinite space and in infinite time. But of eternal life, and of eternal happiness, there is but one fountain, even God: and to sinners such as we are, that fountain is for ever closed, unless we have access to it through Christ, and for his sake are regarded by his Father as “clean every whit.”

SERMON XIX.

LUKE xvii. 36, 37.

Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

THE question here put to our Lord by his disciples, seems to partake somewhat of the spirit in which the prophecies of the Scripture are generally read, and by which their usefulness is very greatly lessened. Nor is this spirit confined to the prophecies only: it is often seen in the explanations given of the parables of our Lord, and indeed of every other part of Scripture. What I mean, is the habit of making the prophecies or parables allude to one thing only, when in fact they allude to many; the making them relate to particular places, persons, and nations, when, in fact, they relate to particular sins, temptations, and states of mind, which have existed in a great many different places, and in many different persons and nations. Thus we lose the benefit of what we read in two ways: first, by understanding it as speaking of past

times, or of other persons, we keep our own lives and consciences out of its reach ; and secondly, we absolutely turn our food into poison, by using such passages as weapons of controversy, wherewith to triumph over others, instead of turning their edge, as we should do, to cut off what is evil in ourselves.

To apply this to the words of the text. It is very true that Jerusalem was the immediate occasion of our Lord's discourse, and its destruction was the first illustration of the truth of his prophecy. When he declared that " in the days of the Son of Man, two men should be in the field ; that one should be taken, and the other left," it was a natural question, on the part of his disciples, to ask him where this would be : in what country, and upon what persons, was this sudden and searching judgment to fall ? Let us mark the words of Christ's answer : " Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together." The words are clearly a sort of proverb ; but their meaning cannot be doubtful. " You ask where this judgment is to fall—upon what country, and on what people. I tell you, everywhere. Wherever there is sin and carelessness, there will be the judgment ; even as there are surely found birds of prey, wherever there is a carcass to devour. Do not then deceive yourselves by giving to my words a local and personal meaning, which would cripple their general usefulness. If they applied to

Jerusalem only, in less than forty years, when Jerusalem will be destroyed, the lesson they contain would be useless. But their truth and their force shall last for centuries after Jerusalem is in ruins; and after the nation by which Jerusalem is to finish, has been cut off from the face of the earth in its turn. ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away;’ and till heaven and earth do pass, there never will be a time, there never will be a country, there never will be an individual, to whom they will not be as useful and as applicable as to the Jews at this moment.”

Such I conceive to be the purport of our Lord’s reply to his disciples, when he said, “Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” And it is according to the lesson thus conveyed, that I would wish to dwell upon the words of the preceding verse, “Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”

I take them as applying to ourselves who are this day here assembled. We are “all together in the field,” engaged in the same daily business; living, in a manner, to ourselves, during the greatest part of the year; and so much engaged amongst ourselves, that we have little time or inclination to take much part in what is going on elsewhere. Nay, from the very circumstances of

our case, we are in a closer relation to each other than can exist between neighbours in general society. The words of a former verse are applicable to us here: "Two men shall be in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left." We are not only working together in the field, that is, engaged together in the same occupations of our busier hours; but, like the two men in one bed, our hours of rest, of refreshment, and amusement, are all shared together likewise. No connexion can be well closer, both in hours of work and hours of play and enjoyment, than that of those who are being brought up together at the same school.

But mark what follows next: our Lord says, "Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left: two men shall be in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left." It is even so, indeed. We are living closely together now; we share in one another's business and pleasures; but shall we be always so united? If the veil could for a moment be drawn up, which hangs over the future; if we could but look eight or ten years onwards, how infinite would be the variety of fortune experienced by those now here assembled, who have now so much in common with each other! The one shall be taken and the other left. Life will wear an infinitely varied aspect then, to those who find

it now so uniform. What a difference of success and failure, of prosperity and adversity, of wealth and poverty, rank and obscurity, of joy and grief, will befall those who are now in circumstances so similar! And what mortal eye, though ever so well acquainted with the present characters and fortunes of you all, could dare to predict your future destiny? Who shall be taken and who left; on whom misfortune will fall, and whom it may spare; nothing in your present state can enable any man so much as to guess. Even in the common points of worldly fortune, there can be formed no sure calculation, so suddenly and so unexpectedly, even in these matters, do our prospects, in a few years, either brighten or darken. But still less can we form the slightest notion of our happiness and misery in after life; of what may be the state of our domestic relations; what the condition of our health and faculties; what the degree of respect or indifference with which we may be treated in the world. Nothing, indeed, is more striking, than, when we have lived ten or twenty years from the period of our leaving school, to consider the various fates of those with whom we were once living so familiarly, as far as it may be in our power to trace it. Above all, we thus gain a very lively notion of the uncertainty of the duration of life; for few can look thus around, even in the full vigour of manhood, without perceiving

that many of those who entered on the world with them, and who set out from one common port, have even already ceased to accompany them, and are gone down in their first spring time to the grave.

But our Lord's words have yet a further and more solemn application. "Two men shall be in the field: the one shall be taken, and the other left." If the streams of our several fortunes were but divided for a time, and all were to unite again, and find their way together into one and the self-same ocean, the sense of their separation would be far less awful. But, instead of this, we know that, in too many cases, the streams do but flow further and further asunder, till their end at last is the very extreme of distance and difference. We know, in short, that, in the most solemn sense of all, one will at last be taken, and the other left; one taken away into outer darkness, the other left, as a full shock of corn on the harvest-field, to be gathered into the garner of his Lord. So near, so closely connected with each other now; yet then as far parted asunder, as to hell and heaven! In that day, the eagles of God will surely seek out their prey, and with most infallible certainty will fix on it. No more mixture of good and evil then; no more of the wheat and tares growing together, when the tares were spared lest the wheat should be hurt by rooting them up; no more blessings undeservedly

enjoyed by evil men, because they are in the same field together with the good, and the rain and the sunshine which God gives it must fall equally upon all those who work in it. But then, one shall be taken, and the other left; the Lord has taken to him his great power, and reigneth; and all that he regards in those whom he had suffered to live here together, is, whether they are fit to be ~~be~~ transplanted together to heaven.

Such will be the separation that will, one day or other, take place amongst us who are now so closely connected. But this last separation differs in one very great point from that other and nearer separation which I spoke of just before, when we go out to our several fortunes in life. Of *that*, I said, that no human eye could judge, or even guess, who amongst the congregation now here assembled, would be taken, and who would be left; whose lot in life would be prosperous, and whose the contrary. And not only can we not guess, but no efforts of your own can be sure of success in this matter; do what you will, the experience of all ages has proved that you cannot insure earthly prosperity. But, in the great separation that will take place hereafter, it does depend on yourselves, for I speak to persons already called to the privileges of Christ's Gospel, and with all things ready on Christ's part to give you the victory; it does, I say, depend on yourselves, whether you shall be among those who are

taken, or among those who are left. And not only so, but they who watch you narrowly, cannot but see *that* in your several characters, which is the seed, however far from maturity, of eternal happiness or misery. True, indeed, that the seed which promises the fairest may be blighted, withered, choked, and never come to the harvest; true, also, that the seed of the worst and most deadly plants, may, also, be timely smothered, or the plant, in its middle growth, may be weeded out, and thrown away. We may neither rashly nor blindly trust the promise of good, nor fearfully and desperately abandon to itself the promise of evil. Still there is the seed at this moment to be seen, which, if it does hold on its natural progress to the end, will yield the harvest of life in some, of death in others. And, therefore, we have deep reason to be thankful for every mark of early goodness; we dare not slight as trifling the faintest sign of early wickedness. *We* dare not, nor should *you* dare; for if you do slight such signs, they become every year darker and more fatal, and give more alarming assurance of a deadly issue. There are some boys whose tempers are weak and timid, who yield to the persuasions of others, who dislike trouble and fear danger. But the Christian's spirit is not the spirit of fear, nor the spirit of softness; but the spirit of power and of hardiness, and of love, and of a sound mind. And such tempers, if

they are not often guilty of violence or cruelty, are very apt to sink into sensual lusts, meanness, and fraud, and all the baseness of luxurious selfishness ; for it is not without reason that St. Paul puts the sins of uncleanness, and of covetousness or selfish greediness, so close together ; both very commonly belong to the same character. Others again are bold and overbearing, insolent and oppressive ; tyrants to all within their power, and offensive to their equals and superiors. This character, too, so totally opposite as it is to Christian charity, hardens more and more with the hardening influences of the world, till it becomes, like the wayside in the parable of the sower, so hard that the seed of eternal life makes not a moment's impression on it. It is most common to see it retained through life ; to see those, who were known at school as cruel and oppressive, go on in life equally hard and unprincipled at the bottom, however much the mere forms of society oblige them to cloak it under a manner of outward decency and courtesousness. Others again, and these by far the more numerous body, are with no such decided symptoms of evil,—neither cowardly and weak, nor cruel and oppressive, with no more alarming sign than a general thoughtlessness, and a fondness for what they like to do rather than for what they ought. With no more alarming sign, it is true ; but is not this alone

alarming enough? If it be not, what becomes of Christ's words, that unless a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be his disciple? He means, that a man, to be a Christian, must be living upon principle, and not according to his humour: that they who are called good-natured, are often good-natured by fits and starts, or by halves; they are so in some instances, that is, they will do a kind thing to please their companions, but they do not care if they give their parents pain by their extravagance and by their neglect of their proper duties; that they are good-natured, in short, from constitution and fancy, not out of a true Christian spirit of kindness. It is true that thoughtlessness, merely considered in itself, is a fault which growing years are very likely to amend; and this is the reason, I believe, why older persons sometimes view it with indifference. It is true that the empty house will surely be filled hereafter; but, because it has been left so long empty, it is the evil spirits, far more than the Spirit of God, that are likely to become its inhabitants. I use the language of that beautiful parable which was read in the Gospel of this morning, and which so strongly enforces the truth, that idleness and carelessness, although they are very likely to be themselves removed, are likely also to be only changed for other and worse evils, instead of for good. In fact, in other words,

he who is idle in youth, because that is the natural fault of youth, is likely to be worldly-minded in after life, because that is the natural fault of manhood. And, therefore, I regard carelessness as an evil and alarming symptom, because it is a proof, that in the heart left so empty, the Spirit of God cannot be abiding; and where he is not, it is but a choice between varieties of evil. Finally, there are some in whom the Spirit's work, though faint, is already visible; who are walking, however imperfectly, in the faith and fear of God. This, too, is a seed, which has its proper fruit, and that fruit is life eternal. But let the sight of the natural world, at this very season, remind those in whom this seed exists, how much they must do to foster it. Those buds which are now swelling upon every tree, may be, and too many of them will be, cut off by frosts or storms, and their promise will end in nothing. Be ye, therefore, careful and watchful, remembering, that although you have in you the seed of good, yet perpetual prayer and labour are required to preserve it unharmed until the harvest.

SERMON XX.

1 PET. iv. 11.

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God : if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth : that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

THE same sentiment is expressed by St. Paul, where he says, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." It is, indeed, one of the very foundation stones of revelation, that God should, in our actions, be all in all; as it is the great guilt of those who know, and do not, that, "knowing God, they yet glorify him not as God, neither are thankful." St. Peter, it is true, is speaking in the text particularly, of certain offices in the early Christian church. The offices were various, and so were the gifts required to fulfil them properly; but all these were wrought by one and the self-same Spirit; whether it were the gift of speaking or of preaching, which was required to do the office of an apostle or prophet; or the

gift of an active and cheerful spirit, which was needed for the office of minister or deacon, whose principal business was to provide for the bodily wants of the poor. But it is clear that the meaning of St. Peter's words applies to all offices and all callings whatever, and to all the various gifts by which God enables us to discharge their several duties. If any man speak, if any man minister, if any man labour with his hands, or if any work with his understanding ; whether our business be active or quiet ; whether we are engaged in the actual duties of life, or in the preparation for them ; still we should labour, as by the ability which God giveth ; and we should strive in all things to glorify God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I proceed, then, to apply this general rule to those cases in which we ourselves, who are now here assembled, most require it. And I will follow a division analogous to that of the Apostle. I will first speak of our labours of the understanding ; next, of our labours of charity ; and, lastly, of all our more general conduct, which may not properly fall under either of the two former heads. In all these, we are worse than nothing, unless we glorify God through Jesus Christ.

First, then, of our labours of the understanding. "If any man speak," says St. Peter, "let him speak as the oracles of God." May I say,

“If any man read, let him read as if his book were God’s work ;” or, “as if he were God’s scholar?” To read is, with most of us, our particular appointed business ; we spend, or ought to spend, a great deal of time in it : but what shall we do, if, during this large portion of our time, God is far away from us ? If God be not in our reading, considering how much of our day is spent in it, is it not somewhat like living without God in the world ? Yet it is not possible that all, or the greatest part of our reading, should be strictly about God. We read the books of the heathen, who did not know him ; we read also many books of those who did know him, but whose works, unhappily, give no sign that they did so. We read books of science, or books of entertainment, where we cannot expect the name of God to find a place. How, then, can we read all these as if we were God’s scholars ? how, in dwelling upon subjects so little seemingly connected with him, can we be glorifying God through Jesus Christ ? It seems that the question is not an easy one, since it has been found so difficult, in practice at least, to answer it. We see that they who profess to glorify God in all their lives, do it, not by reading all things as God’s scholars ; but by giving up many kinds of reading altogether. We see, on the other hand, that they whose knowledge is the deepest, and whose under-

standings are the most highly cultivated, too often have, amidst all their knowledge, retained no place for God ; that neither with their lips, nor in their lives, do they glorify him. It is too common a case to excite our wonder, that knowledge is not always followed by goodness : and we know that without goodness God cannot be glorified. It seems, then, a very difficult thing to read on a great variety of subjects, and yet read as God's scholars : difficult as most Christian graces are difficult ; but not surely impossible ; if we follow the right way of effecting it. Now we cannot read all things as God's scholars, if we have never been his scholars at all ; we cannot find him, or see him, by faith, in every place, if we have never learnt to know his voice where it speaks in its own proper tones to us. In other words, we cannot make a Christian use of other books, if the book of God itself be not familiar to us. Nor, again, can we possibly turn common things into our spiritual food : we shall not easily be led to think of the highest things by the study of books on worldly matters, if, even when the occasion directly calls for it, our thoughts are still slow to travel heavenward. I can conceive a man praying in church, or in his own house, at certain stated times of prayer, and yet never thinking of God when he is reading a history or a poem : but it is absolutely impossible that such books

should make him think of God, if he does not think of him at other times; if his prayers be omitted or said carelessly, it is out of the question that he should feel any thing like a devotional spirit when reading the histories, poems, or orations, of a heathen. And, therefore, if we would learn to read every thing as God's scholars, we must at least read the Bible as such; I mean with a sincere desire to practise it. I am quite sure, that even if the lessons read every Sunday in the church service were but carefully attended to, there could not be so much ignorance of the Scriptures as we now meet with. Coming over again, as these lessons do, year after year, it would seem no difficult matter to remember them; and although they form only a small part of the whole Bible, yet even these, if thoroughly known, would be of very great service to us. Indeed, if they were well known, we may be pretty sure that more of the Bible would be known also: it is not natural that what we really know should excite in us no interest or curiosity to know more. But, if we do once get a knowledge of the Bible,—by which I mean not a knowledge of the mere history and antiquities of the Jews, but of the principles of life which the Bible teaches; and, above all, the great principle which runs through it from beginning to end, that God should be all in all to us in our lives,—then we learn to get that true view of the world

and all things in it, which will in a manner perforce present itself to our minds whenever a false view is laid before us. If this be rooted and implanted in us, any thing opposite to it will no more fail to bring it vividly before us, than any thing that is agreeable to it: nay, I know not that the very contrast does not serve to set it off, and whether the Christian ever feels more keenly awake to the purity of the spirit of the Gospel, than when he reads the history of crimes and follies related with no true sense of their evil; or, when in the deepest strains of passionate poetry, all the miseries and all the joys of life are touched upon, save that only misery of sin, which *he* knows to be alone incurable, save that only joy of a heart at peace with God, which he knows to be alone eternal.

We may read all things then, and yet read all as God's scholars; drawing even from the writings of those who thought but of evil, or at least were utterly careless of God, a food for holy and spiritual principles to be nourished with. And then we see the force of Christ's words, when he said, that "every scribe, instructed to the kingdom of heaven, is like unto an householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." The extent and variety of our knowledge, the command of things new and old, of things sacred and things profane, does indeed instruct us with tenfold power for the

service of the kingdom of God. But if acquired without that knowledge and love of God which can make it minister to his service, then, indeed, it does any thing but instruct us to the kingdom of heaven ; the exercise of our understanding, if made in such a case our principal employment, is one of the surest and speediest poisons to our souls ; there is no evil spirit who may not find room for himself easily in that heart, which is occupied only by the gay and yet dead furniture of intellectual knowledge.

I have spoken more at length upon this point, because it concerns what is our peculiar business here. Yet the next point is no less worthy of our notice—our labours of charity, or our acts of kindness to our neighbours. “ If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth.” If we give but a cup of cold water to one of the humblest of our brethren, let it be done for Christ’s sake. Perhaps the need of our remembering this is greater than we are apt to imagine. There is something so delightful in kindness, so natural in the wish to please and to relieve, so exceedingly sweet in the consciousness of having done good to others, and in receiving the return of their grateful love, that I am afraid our charity is very often unsanctified ; we think of our suffering brethren only, without remembering who it is that puts himself forward in their persons to receive our love,

and if we will but see him, to take in their behalf the office of overpaying all that we can do to them. We see not Christ in those who need our charity : we see not God in our own ability to relieve them. For what have we that we have not received ; and that which we give them, are we the owners of it in truth, or only the stewards of God's bounty ? I speak of charity, and of relieving the poor ; but it applies no less to every kindness, to whomsoever bestowed. Good-nature, and all the various ways which we have of obliging one another where there is no need of alms, are naturally highly popular, and, to most minds, carry their own reward with them. But here, too, we give, or we show kindness without thinking of God, and the consequence is evil both to others and to ourselves. To others, because, thinking that whatever kindness we show, we had a right in a manner not to show, we soon become satisfied with what we do, and even allow ourselves sometimes to look upon it as a compensation for ill-humour, neglect, or even positive unkindness and insult. To ourselves, because, forgetting our Master, and what he has done for us, and what he requires of us, we compare ourselves only with ourselves, and are then soon contented with our progress. A little thing becomes magnified, when the scale is so minute ; and we are pleased with ourselves for our good and amiable qualities, when, had we tried our hearts by

Christ's law, we should have seen how little room there was for self-satisfaction, and how much more there was in them of selfishness than of love,

So again, in all those parts of our conduct which do not come under either of these two heads, there is no real goodness, there is even no safety from condemnation, unless we glorify God through Jesus Christ. With regard to the employment of our time, the exercise of our bodily faculties, the government of our tongues, how soon shall we be satisfied, and into how much of real sin shall we continually be falling, if we do not, in all these matters, remember that we are but stewards of God's manifold bounties: that our time, our bodies, and the wonderful faculty of speech, were all only lent us to improve them; lent us to glorify him who gave them. And to glorify him in Jesus Christ, for the Father and the Son may never be separated; and we can neither know nor glorify, nor in anywise please the Father, but only through his Son Jesus Christ. That is, that all our thoughts, and all our actions, are unworthy of God's acceptance; that they can be accepted by him only in his beloved Son. He in our place and we in his: that as he took upon him the infirmities of our nature, we might be clothed with the perfections of his; and as he died because we were sinners, so we might be loved, and receive eternal life, because he is righteous.

SERMON XXI.

MARK vi. 31.

And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while : for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

THERE are a great many considerations which this single passage may give birth to ; but two in particular may be made most applicable to our present circumstances. The one is, the example of earnest and unabated labour afforded by Christ and his Apostles : “ they had no leisure so much as to eat ;” and the other, the spirit and meaning of his words, “ Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.” Both these points seem capable of yielding much that is useful to all of us who are now here assembled.

We are accustomed to think of our Lord as furnishing us with an example of many things ; but not particularly of energy and constant exertion. We think of his devotion to God, of his

benevolence, his meekness, his patience, and of many others of the perfections of his character; but we do not perhaps observe, that he affords to us a no less perfect pattern of those excellences which St. Paul has so well described in one single verse, when he tells the Roman Christians to be “not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” In this, as in other things, “Christ pleased not himself;” but was content to give up his whole time and all his faculties to the service of God. “They had no leisure so much as to eat.”

These last words are well illustrated by another passage in the Gospel of St. John, where it says, that his disciples left Jesus by the side of a well, in Samaria, while they themselves went to the neighbouring town to buy food. Whilst they were absent, a woman of Samaria came to the well, and our Lord was engaged in speaking with her, and with the men of the town, whom her report of him brought to see him. At last his disciples came back and brought the food, and begged him to eat. But even then his answer was, that he had meat to eat which they knew not of; and this meat, he said, was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work.

It appears then that what hindered our Lord from having leisure so much as to eat, was the intense interest which he felt in doing his Father's

work. His was not a bondman's service, giving to the task he hates the least possible share of his time and strength; it was indeed the zealous service of a son, who came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him. What a lesson is this for all of us,—I speak not only of the younger ones amongst us, but of us all; what a lesson to us, when we are so eager, if I may so speak, to change the stones into bread, to indulge our natures with refreshment and ease; and when our work, even in the best of us, is too often, if not in a bondman's, at least in a hireling's spirit; if we do not dislike it, we yet are apt to be too much satisfied with ourselves for doing it, and to look upon it too fondly as giving us a claim to so much reward.

But it is well, too, to consider the nature of our Lord's work. "There were many coming and going." His work was not silent and solitary study; it was not the labour of his hands in some one regular business, in which, though the hands are employed, the mind may be at rest, and the man may go to rest at night with only that sort of weariness which makes sleep the wholesomer and the sweeter. Christ's was not the labour of mind only, nor the labour of body only; but both together. It was the kind of labour which is indeed the very best for the spiritual health of us all, but which is to our

bodies and our minds perhaps the most fatiguing : I mean, constant personal intercourse with others, in the endeavour to do good to their bodies and their souls. Our Lord was hardly ever alone, nor was he, though in a crowd, yet in a crowd with which he had no concern, so that he might still follow his own thoughts and his own business ; but his thoughts were of them,—his business was to do them good. Nor was it a multitude of the same persons, but one continually changing : “There were many coming and going.” This may seem a little thing to notice ; but I believe, with regard to the increase of excitement and consequent exhaustion which it occasions, it is by no means trifling. The very constant sight of new faces,—the mere confusion of the perpetual moving to and fro,—the being obliged so often to repeat the same things to a succession of different persons, and not having any of them long enough our hearers to have acquired for them, or inspired in them towards us, a particular personal knowledge and regard,—all these are things which serve to make exertion felt more deeply. But this was the course of life that our Lord chose ; and his fervent love towards God and man made him follow it so heartily, that he would not allow himself leisure so much as to eat.

Yet, with all this constant activity in doing good, let us hear the words of the text that follow :

“Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.” We know, from other places in the Gospels, of what sort of rest our Lord was here speaking, and how he employed these hours of retirement and solitude. No doubt, partaking as he did of the bodily infirmities of our nature, he required rest, literally and in the simplest sense of the word,—and no doubt also that such periods of rest and entire refreshment are not only allowable but useful, and even necessary. Yet Christ shows us how we may refresh our bodies and minds without letting our souls suffer; how we may return from such retirement, strengthened alike in body and in soul for the work that is set before us. These times, which our Lord passed in a desert place, generally, that is, among the mountains that rise at some little distance from the shores of the sea of Galilee, were his favourite times of prayer and meditation. For this, even the work of daily charity was suspended; inasmuch as he knew, that to man’s nature even the work of charity itself became hurtful, if the spirit of faith and love to God were suffered to flag; and that to be continually doing, however good may be the works, has a tendency to make us too much satisfied with them and with ourselves. It is only God who worketh hitherto without cessation, whose providence for the works of his

hands never slumbers. And when our Lord defended his own healing a man on the Sabbath day by the example of his Father, to whom all days are alike,—(“for he who keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep,”) the Jews rightly understood, that he was thereby making himself equal with God. But he who, as God, worked and does work for ever, yet as man, and for our example, thought it right to vary his active labours with intervals of religious rest.

Here, then, in these three parts of the text,—in the zeal with which our Lord pursued his work,—in the particular nature of it,—and in the rest with which he thought fit from time to time to vary it, and to refresh himself for it,—there is matter of special improvement for three different classes of persons, such as in the three temptations which befell him at the beginning of his ministry. The zeal with which he pursued his work, so that they had no leisure so much as to eat, is an example for that most numerous class who are merely following their pleasure, or who, if obliged to work, yet work unwillingly and grudgingly. The particular nature of Christ’s work is an example and a warning for those who, like the ground choked with thorns, are working, indeed, and working zealously; but whose work is never of that sort as Christ’s: it is worldly in its

beginning, and worldly also in its end. And in the rest which Christ took from time to time, and the uses which he made of it, even they who are actually labouring in his service may learn how alone their labour may be blessed to themselves as well as to others: how their work may indeed be such as that when they fail in this world, they may be received into the everlasting habitations of God.

In all considerations of this kind, it is of the last importance that we all see clearly the particular class of men to which we ourselves belong, and apply to ourselves that particular lesson which is intended for us. A Pharisee might have received more harm than good by listening to our Lord's reproaches of the false doctrines of the Sadducees; a publican, in the same manner, might have been injured by dwelling upon what Christ said of the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The condemnation of faults not our own, is easy; but it is, at the same time, worse than unprofitable. Thus irreligious persons delight in all those passages of Scripture which speak of the worthlessness of saying, "Lord, Lord," unless we do his will; they are rejoicing that they are not hypocrites, forgetting that they are all the while something even worse. Their concern is not with the deceit of Jacob, but with the profaneness of Esau. And it should be remem-

bered also, that the very worst cases of brute wickedness are, for this very reason, not so much mentioned in Scripture, as other less shocking offences, because God's word needed not to dwell upon what mere natural reason and conscience taught us to regard with abhorrence. Atrocious cruelty, utter hardness and brutality of feeling, and a want of natural affection to our relations, are things which are not so much human vices, as monstrosities: God's revealed will is intended to carry us on further than we could have gone by our mere natural knowledge of him, not to repeat over again what we must be—more like beasts than men if we do not know already. Christians do not need to be enjoined what even common sinners are not so vile as to leave undone, nor to be warned against sins which even publicans and sinners would shrink from. “Sinners, also, love those that love them;—sinners, also, lend to sinners, that they may receive as much again.”

To apply this to the present case:—those among us who have no zeal for any kind of useful labour;—who hardly exercise at all, or exercise no more than they must, their common faculties of the understanding;—who, so far from devoting their hearts to God, have not even learnt to love their own earthly relations, but prefer their own selfish and brute enjoyments, to their

own improvement or the wishes of their friends ;— they who care for nothing so much as for eating, drinking, and playing ;—with these the two latter parts of the text have, as yet, little to do ; they are not advanced high enough to need them. The lesson which they require is the first and simplest part of the text : to learn diligence from Christ's example ; to follow their work more earnestly, and in a better spirit ; to think that there is something in life, higher and better than the enjoyments of a beast. Unless they get so far as this, there is no danger, indeed, of the seed being parched up for want of root, and much less of its being choked by over-luxuriant weeds ; their hearts are but the hard wayside, too dull and too degraded for the seed ever to live in them at all. No one, in short, can ever be a Christian, if he is not fit to be a man. It will be time enough hereafter to tell them of the wisdom of religious rest, even from Christian duties, when they have some notion of what Christian duty is. It will be time enough to talk of the danger of too much admiring their mere intellectual faculties, when they shall have first learnt to exert and take pleasure in them at all. Instead of thinking, then, that they are not guilty of intellectual pride, or of too highly valuing their own virtues, they should recollect why they are not guilty of these things, and that it is only because they cannot be proud of what they have not got, and that their own faults

are of a much lower order ; not the pride of having conquered themselves, but gross selfishness ; not loving man more than God, but themselves more than man ; not trusting too much to their understandings, but altogether neglecting them. For them, therefore, much of the Gospel is as yet a dead letter ; they must be far above what they are now, before they can require to be warned against the faults of Christians ; they must first learn to acquire the common virtues and excellences of men. In short, they must be not far from the kingdom of God, before they can hope to enter into it ; they must be sensible to the laws of nature and reason, before they can ever understand those of the Gospel.

SERMON XXII.

MARK vi. 31.

And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile : for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

BEFORE I go on with the subject of the text, it may be right to make one or two remarks, in order to prevent what I said on Sunday last from being misunderstood, and that too, so misunderstood, as to render it mischievous rather than useful. I said, that it was very important that we should all understand clearly the particular class of characters to which we ourselves belong ; that so we may each apply to ourselves the particular lesson which is intended for us. And, to apply this to the case before us, I said, that they who had no zeal for any kind of labour were not concerned with exhortations to choose rather that sort of labour which is most useful, and, still less, with warnings not to pursue their labour too eagerly. Such persons, I said, had not got

far enough for lessons of this kind ; but required first to learn from our Lord's example of mere diligence in his calling, without regard to the after question of what his particular calling was. But, in thus speaking of classes of characters, I never supposed that these would always go along with particular ages, or particular situations in life. Generally speaking, no doubt, mere idleness is the fault of the very young ; and, generally speaking, they would less require the warning against labouring in worldly things only, or against labouring without some intervals of religious rest. Yet it would be very foolish to suppose, either that no young boy had any need to be reminded of these points, or that no older person required to be excited to simple diligence and exertion. There are many cases in which the old require what is properly the instruction of the young,—many in which the young require to be warned against the faults of more advanced age,—many also, in which both will stand in need at once of both. It happens that one fault may be partly, not entirely subdued ; that we may be grown enough in character to be liable to new temptations, without being out of the reach of our old ones ; that, therefore, we may require to guard at once against the evils which beset different points of our progress, even if we need not guard against each in an equal

degree. But of all this no man can judge in his neighbour; it were well if he could always judge truly of it even in himself. In speaking then of the besetting faults of early age, I do not mean, either that all the young require most to be warned against these, or that none but the young are concerned with them; in speaking of the besetting faults of a riper character, there may be young persons who have great need to beware of them, and there may be old persons who have not; and, again, there may be very many, both old and young, to whom it may be highly useful to be cautioned against both.

These things are of consequence everywhere, but particularly so in a congregation like the present, where the differences of age are so strongly marked. Were this not remembered, I might be thought, at one time, to be preaching against one part of my hearers, and, at another time, against another; and the remarks that I make may be supposed to be levelled at particular persons, rather than at particular faults and dangers. And those differences in our situation and relations to one another, which elsewhere are necessarily kept up, may be carried into things, and to places where they should be wholly lost sight of. For when we are here assembled, as more immediately in the presence of God, our relation to God and Christ is brought out into such clear light, and presses, or ought to press, so

strongly upon the minds of us all, that our common earthly relations to each other sink, for the time, into insignificance. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; but Christ is all and in all.

One thing more may be added, which ought also to be always taken into the account, in the exercise of the Christian ministry. The preacher, in speaking of faults and temptations, should not be supposed to have gained his knowledge of them only from the characters of others; if he be commonly honest, and commonly in earnest, his own heart must have afforded him some of his best lessons. Where indeed can we, any of us, learn so truly the strength of temptation and man's weakness; where can we so well have understood the dangers of youth, and the dangers of manhood, as by studying our own souls, and dwelling upon the records of our own experience? And if it be thought that we cannot dare to preach against faults of which we may be conscious ourselves, and that, therefore, we must be thinking only of our neighbours, he who so judges, judges either most hardly of human weakness, or most unworthily of the Christian minister's office. Most hardly of human weakness, if he expects the knowledge and consciousness of sin to be the same thing as the victory over it; most unworthily of the Christian minister's office, if he thinks that, in this place, the weakest may

not speak with something of his Master's power ; and, however in himself insufficient, that he may not have gained ample sufficiency for Christ's sake, to speak Christ's message.

And now I may resume my proper subject, and proceed to the full consideration of the first of the three lessons which Christ's conduct, as described in the text, affords us ; the lesson of zeal in the discharge of our daily duties. "For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."

There are some dispositions, which, from absolute indolence, seem to be zealous about nothing whatever ;—persons who appear neither to care about business or pleasure, who cannot be roused to take an active interest in any thing. These are characters which exist, and which we must all have sometimes met with : but they are not common, neither are they very dangerous, because the general feeling of men is apt to despise them as stupid and insensible. A much more common case is that of persons who like some things exceedingly, and are all alive whenever they happen to be engaged in them ; but who do not like their common employment, and display about that no interest at all. This is a very common case, for it rarely happens that our employment is the very one which we should most choose, or the one which we most choose at this particular time, or

under these particular circumstances. And yet if it be not, even although we may not dislike it in itself, we may dislike it in comparison with what we like better ;—and this for all the purposes of destroying our interest in it is nearly the same thing as if we disliked it in itself. For instance, we all know that the expectation of any great pleasure is apt to unsettle our minds : although our work may commonly interest us tolerably, yet now, with this prospect before us, it seems dull and tiresome ; we regard it merely as a burden, and grudge every hour that we give to it. So then, it seems that we must all expect to have our work often disagreeable to us, and that in many cases it is always disagreeable ; disagreeable I mean by nature, and speaking according to common notions. But to say that a man can do heartily what is disagreeable to him, is to talk of impossibilities ; he can no more do it than he can have an appetite for nauseous food : he will attend to what he dislikes no more than he can help ; and, so far from following it up so earnestly as to allow himself no leisure so much as to eat, he will be glad of every excuse, and enlarge as much as possible upon the claims of his health, his strength, and his reasonable liberty, in order to abridge to the utmost the time which he cannot altogether refuse, to what he knows to be the call of duty.

It may be said then, that I have given the idle all the excuse they can desire ; for I say that no one *can* do heartily what is disagreeable to him, and they will maintain very truly that their daily employment *is* disagreeable to them. I know that it is so ; but it does not follow that it must always *remain so*. True it is, that we cannot do heartily what we dislike ; but it is no less true, that we may learn if we will to like many things which we at present dislike : and the real guilt of idleness consists in its refusal to go through this discipline. I might speak of the well-known force of habit, in reconciling us to what is most unwelcome to us ; that by mere perseverance what was at first very hard, becomes first a little less so, then much less so, and at last so easy, that, according to a well-known law of our faculties, it becomes a pleasure to them to do it. But, although perseverance will certainly do this, yet what is to make us so persevering ?—if we go through this discipline it will cure us, but what can engage us to give it a fair trial ? And here it is that I would bring in the power of Christ's example ; here it is that the grace of God through Christ will give us the victory. " Christ pleased not himself ;—Christ allowed himself no leisure so much as to eat." For what did he do this, and for whom ? For our salvation, and for our spirits' sakes, that we through his poverty might be made rich. And who was He who so

denied himself? The Son of God, the heir of all things; even He by whom all things were created, and by whose providence they are sustained. Yet He would not allow himself fully to use them, but thought it his meat to do the will of Him that sent him, and to finish his work. And who are we who do not deny ourselves? His creatures, who owe every thing to his goodness, and yet day by day are unworthy of it; his creatures, who, with no right to so much as the crumbs under his table, think it hard if we cannot sit down and rest and enjoy, under circumstances in which he never rested; his creatures, who, offending him every hour, are yet impatient of any thing but pleasure at his hands; who with so much of that guilt for which He was pleased to be crucified, are yet unwilling to submit to that discipline, which his pure and spotless soul endured cheerfully for no need of his own, but for our sakes.

Alas! this touches us all, young and old alike: we may not well find fault with others in this matter; but we may and must speak of it to them as their heinous sin against God, from which would to God that we were any of us wholly clear! Indeed, my brethren, we too early gain, we too fondly cling to the notion, that we come into this world to seek our happiness in it. Too large a proportion of our fellow-creatures are cured of this error by necessity;—there are too many who are taught by

early and excessive labour, and by greater suffering than ever self-denial would impose upon them, that this world is for them at least no place of enjoyment. Their over labour doubly shames our over indulgence. But the truth which they cannot but learn, we must learn also, or we perish for ever. If we make this life what Christ will not have it be,—if where we should labour, we presume to rest,—where we should deny ourselves, we revel in enjoyment,—we at once wrong our poorer brethren and insult Christ ;—we laugh in fact at his view of human life, at his constant exertion, and his self-denial ;—we think that we judge more wisely in pleasing ourselves, and snatching our joys while we may. If we are right, then indeed his example was needless ; but if that example were given as our pattern,—if as he was, so should we be in this world ; if he himself was made perfect through suffering, and entered not into glory without first suffering pain,—what will become of us, if, unpurified and unsanctified, with no labour of love done, with all Christ's labour and sufferings despised as thankless, we offer ourselves for entrance into that eternal kingdom where none but his redeemed can enter ? What will become of us, if, enjoying when we should be labouring, and thinking of our pleasure instead of doing his will, we were to hear his summons at the door ? Would he, will he, find us watching when he calls ;—faithful

stewards of his gifts, each in our several station doing the work of his house, with loins girded about and lamps burning? Blessed be our portion if he does: but if otherwise,—if eating and drinking, injuring our fellow-servants, and despising him,—we know what will be our portion; we know that we shall call on the rocks to fall on us, rather than meet his presence then.

SERMON XXIII.

LUKE v. 29.

And Levi made him a great feast in his own house : and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

THE text on which I have been speaking for the two last Sundays, describes our Lord as continually surrounded by a multitude of persons who were constantly coming and going,—a moving crowd, full of curiosity to hear a prophet of whom they had heard so much, and hoping too to see some of his wonderful miracles performed before them. The verse which I have now chosen from St. Luke shows him nearly in the same situation : he was a guest at a great feast, at which a great company of publicans and others sat down with him. And we see, from what immediately follows, of what sort of character were many of the persons thus assembled ; because the Pharisees directly asked our Lord's disciples, “ Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners ? ”

No doubt, in some respects, our Lord's peculiar character as a prophet makes his example some-

what different from the case of common persons. He is not mentioned as doing many things which we, in the mere discharge of our common duties, not only may, but must do. We cannot, nor ought we, in a literal sense, to *go about* doing good: we have our own homes, and our own settled callings; and it would be only producing wild confusion, if we were all to think of deserting them. Yet still our Lord's example is applicable to us all more or less: it teaches us what sort of employment is always, perhaps, so far as we can pursue it, the most useful to our souls: it shows us, at any rate, what business there is which we can none of us safely neglect altogether; for that which Christ did *always*, Christ's servants cannot certainly be justified if they *never* do. And this business consists in mixing with others, not in the mere line of our trade or calling, and still less for mere purposes of gaiety; but the mixing with others, neither for business nor yet for pleasure, but in the largest sense of the word, for *charity*.

It will, then, be seen how many persons there are who have need to be reminded of this duty. They who really live mostly to themselves are, indeed, in these days very few; and embrace only that small number of persons whose time is principally spent in study; that is, men who are devoted to literature or science. But those who, while they mix with others, yet do it in the line of their

business, or for pleasure's sake, include a very large portion of the world indeed. Statesmen, lawyers, soldiers, sailors, tradesmen, merchants, farmers, labourers, all are necessarily brought much into contact with their fellow-men; there is no danger of their living in loneliness. And persons of no profession, the young, and women of all ages, in the richer classes especially,—they too desire society for the pleasure of it; they think it dull to live out of the world. Yet it is very possible that neither of these two large classes of people may mix with others in the way that Christ mixed with them; they may do it for business or for pleasure, but not for *charity*. And I said that I used the word *charity* in its largest sense, meaning by it, “a desire to do good to others in body or soul;” for it is by no means right to confine it to that narrow sense only, in which it merely means, “relieving the bodily wants of the poor.”

To those then who are not inclined to be idle,—but who, whether from necessity or from activity of mind, are sure to have plenty of employment; nay, who may be so much engrossed by it that it leaves them, as was the case with Christ, “no leisure so much as to eat,”—it becomes of great consequence, not only that they should be as busy as Christ was, but that part of their business, at least, should be of the same kind; not only that

they should be fully employed, but that their employment may, in part at least, be of that sort, as, when they fail, may cause them to be received into everlasting habitations.

A vast field of consideration here opens before us; as vast, indeed, as the various situations which men fill in the world, and the various ways in which they may do works of charity. But it will be better, perhaps, to choose such points, out of the multitude which might be noticed, as seem most likely to suit our particular circumstances here.

With us, either at this moment, or in a succeeding part of our lives, labour is likely to take the form of reading or study. Our notions of work are mostly connected with books: if our employment be at any time so great as to shorten our hours of food and rest, it will generally be the employment of our intellects. Our station in life makes this to be particularly our case; and the state and tendencies of the world around us, will make it still more so. What was accounted great learning some years ago, is no longer reckoned such; what was in the days of our fathers only an ordinary and excusable ignorance, is esteemed as something disgraceful now. In these things, as in all others, never was competition so active,—never were such great exertions needed to obtain success. Those who are in the world know this already; and if

there are any of you who do not know it, it is fit that you should be made aware of it. Every profession, every institution in the country, will be strung up to a higher tone: examinations will be more common and more searching: the qualifications for every public, and profitable, or honourable office, will be raised more and more. All this *will be*, certainly, and no human power can stop it: and I think also, that it ought to be. Undoubtedly knowledge is good, and, in the general improvement of our faculties, I know not where we ought to desire to stop. I know not that our bodies can be too strong and active;—I know not that our knowledge can be too extensive, or our perception of truth too clear. But, “every thing in its own order.” While pursuing so hard a course of study,—while apt to be so engrossed with these exercises of the intellect,—while the leaves of the tree are growing out into such beautiful luxuriance,—what is to become of the fruit? What is to become of that part of us which is fitted for more than earthly happiness; to which Christ has offered and opened the ability to be for ever happy, to be loved by God, and to love him eternally? There are two parts of our nature, which are, in a manner, the very seed of eternal life:—our feelings of humility and love. What will become of us if the strong and intense pursuit after

intellectual excellence smother these? We know that "knowledge is power," and that the consciousness of power is most apt to engender pride; nay, in all but God, it is pride already, if it be not tempered with the consciousness of weakness. But this sense of weakness is least of all present to strong minds when employed in study. While acutely discovering truth, or eloquently enforcing it, they feel a great power within them: a power which common men do not possess, and which, like all other rare qualities, the multitude who have it not themselves admire. This naturally feeds pride, and so stifles humility: and the same thing is likely to happen with charity. In reading we are of necessity much alone; and in reading, also, by the very nature of the case, the understanding, and not the affections, is exercised. To think, is something essentially different from to love. Thus we lose our sympathies with our fellow-creatures, and live in a little world of our own, in which self is ever predominant. We think of others only as rejoicing in our exaltation above them; or, at best, in our power of enlightening them. And we may enlighten them, and may minister to their good, by teaching them many useful truths; but what becomes of our own souls the while? Are they growing up unto eternal life, increasing more and more in the fruits of the Spirit, in faith and love,

in peace and joy? Or, may not our case be like Balaam's, who, after having taught Balak the very sum of wisdom,—when he declared to him that man's duty “was to do justice and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God,”—yet himself lived in sin; and though he had prayed that his latter end might be that of the righteous, yet it was, in truth, that of the wicked; he died with the enemies of God.

It is here, then, that we may derive such immense benefit from following Christ's example,—from taking care to mix habitually with our fellow-creatures, not only for our business or our pleasure, but for charity. No good is done or can be done, when, from his solitary reading, a man only comes forth for a while into what is called brilliant or agreeable society; or into that which deserves only a lower and a fouler name—the society of sensuality and riot. In the first case, the same evil spirits of pride and selfishness which had been with him in his lonely chamber, again haunt the man in the halls of gaiety; in the other case, the spirit of pride is but relieved for a time by the spirit of drunkenness or uncleanness. This is not the intercourse with our fellow-creatures which is to do us good; this is

- not to follow Christ's example. We dare not, in this case, trust ourselves in the society of publicans and sinners: we should not do good

to them, but they would rather infect us with their own evil. But the natural remedy for our peculiar dangers, the way in which we can best mix with our brethren for the nourishing of our affections, is to be found in the intercourse with our own families on the one hand, and with the poor on the other. I cannot but think that in the former of these points, a most evil habit has of late years grown up amongst young men when engaged in reading; I mean, that of going away from their homes, and fixing themselves, for three or four months, in some remote part of the country, where they may study without interruption. It may be, that more is thus read than would be read at home, though scarcely more than might be: but even supposing it to be so, it is a dangerous price that is paid for it. The simple quiet of a common family circle, the innumerable occasions of kindness that it affords, and its strong tendency to draw away our thoughts from self, and to awaken our affections for others,—a discipline precious at every period of life,—can then least of all be spared, when the hardnesses of the world are just coming upon us, when our studies, and even our very animal spirits, are all combining to make us selfish and proud. Nay, at such a time, and to persons whose minds are strongly occupied with the excitement of reading, the mere commonplace society which

most men meet with in the neighbourhood of their own homes, is capable of becoming highly useful. When the Psalmist said that he did not occupy himself with great matters which were too hard for him, but that he refrained his soul and kept it low, he expressed most wisely his sense of the fact, that we must not feed our minds always with great and high thoughts, but that the common trifling interests and conversation of every-day society, are, in their turn, a most wholesome variety. I have often thought that what is sometimes charged as a defect on such society,—that it dwells too much upon personal and individual topics, upon the conduct and affairs of those immediately around us,—is capable of becoming most useful to him who regrets his own want of interest in the common matters of life, and with whom himself and his own pursuits and labours occupy too large a share of his attention.

But, besides this wholesome intercourse with our own families, another way of mixing with our brethren, in a manner most especially pleasing to Christ and useful to ourselves, is by holding frequent intercourse with the poor. Perhaps, to young men of the richer classes, there is nothing which makes their frequent residence in large towns so mischievous to them, as the difficulties which they find in the way of this intercourse. In the country, many a young man knows something, at least, of

his poorer neighbours ; but in towns, the numbers of the poor, and the absence of any special connexion between him and any of them in particular, hinder him, too often, from knowing any thing of them at all : an evil as much to be regretted on the one side as the other ; and which is quite as mischievous to the minds and tempers of the rich, as it is to the bodily condition of the poor. I can imagine hardly any thing more useful to a young man of an active and powerful mind, advancing rapidly in knowledge, and with high distinction either actually obtained, or close in prospect, than to take him—or much better that he should go of himself—to the abodes of poverty, and sickness, and old age. Every thing there is a lesson ; in every thing Christ speaks, and the Spirit of Christ is ready to convey to his heart all that he witnesses. Accustomed to all the comforts of life, and hardly ever thinking what it would be to want them, he sees poverty and all its evils ; scanty room, and, too often, scanty fuel, scanty clothing, and scanty food. Instead of the quiet and neatness of his own chamber, he finds, very often, a noise and a confusion which would render deep thought impossible ; instead of the stores of knowledge with which his own study is filled, he finds, perhaps, only a prayer-book and a Bible. Then let him see,—and it is no fancied picture, for he will see it often,—if he looks for it,—how Christ is to them that serve him,

wisdom, at once, and sanctification, and blessing. He will find, amidst all this poverty, in those narrow, close, and crowded rooms,—amidst noise and disorder, and, sometimes, want of cleanliness also,—he will see old age, and sickness, and labour, borne, not only with patience, but with thankfulness, through the aid of that Bible, and the grace of that Holy Spirit who is its author. He will find that while *his* language and studies would be utterly unintelligible to the ears of those whom he is visiting, yet that *they*, in their turn, have a language and feelings to which he is no less a stranger. And he may think too,—and, if he does, he may for ever bless the hour that took him there,—that in fifty years or less, *his* studies and all concerned with them will have perished for ever, whilst their language and their feelings, only perfected in the putting off their mortal bodies, will be those of all glorified and all wise spirits, in the presence of God and of Christ.

Nor is this most profitable duty of visiting the poor, as I have said on former occasions, one which you can only practise hereafter, and which does not concern you here. Those who really think of their own souls, and who are desirous of improving them, would find that even here it is by no means impossible. It would indeed be a blessed thing, and would make this place really a seminary of true religion and useful learning, if those among us who

are of more thoughtful years, and especially those who are likely to become ministers of Christ hereafter, would remember that their Christian education has commenced already, and that he cannot learn in Christ's school who does not acquaint himself something with the poor. Two or three at first, five or six afterwards,—a very small number might begin a practice which, under proper regulation, and guided by Christian prudence, as well as actuated by Christian love, would be equally beneficial to the poor and to yourselves. Depend upon it the time must come, and come speedily, when the spirit of the schools of the prophets, such as we read of in Israel in old times, must be revived amongst us here, or a worse fate than that of Jerusalem will be ours. If such were the case, if young men here remembered that they were preparing to become, some ministers of Christ, and all his servants,—and if, therefore, they would begin, even here, to practise Christ's lessons, and to follow Christ's example,—I should not dread, but fully rejoice in the highest exertion of their intellectual powers; and a blessing, both on themselves and others, would come upon that pursuit of truth which did not exclude humility, and ministered to the purposes of charity, and to the service of Christ.

SERMON XXIV.

1 PETER v. 6, 7.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time : casting all your care upon him ; for he careth for you.

WE read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that it became Him, for whom and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings. And again, it is said of Christ, that because “ he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that, therefore, God has also highly exalted him, and has given him a name which is above every name.” So also when James and John besought him, that they might sit, the one on his right hand, the other on his left, in his kingdom, his answer was, “ Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism which I am baptized with ? ” meaning, that if they would be like him in his glory, they must first be like him in his sufferings ; that they must, in short, “ through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” Now all

these passages agree with the text in this, that they all speak of good things coming after trouble : they do not allow us to suppose that our course from our birth to eternity is to run all smooth. And though all these passages naturally receive a deeper colouring from outward circumstances ; that is, though the persecution which daily beset the first Christians, and the general calamities which befel the whole Christian world at the downfall of the Roman empire, would make men, living at those particular times, feel the truth of these passages more keenly ;—yet they serve no less for seasons of calm than of storm ; they should remind us in what manner we ought to look upon life beforehand, without being forced to do so, whether we will or no, by the pressure of outward misery.

I dwelt last Sunday upon imitating Christ, so far as it was possible, in the particular sort of employment which he chose, — namely, in the mixing with other men, neither for business only, that is, in the way of our calling,—nor yet for pleasure only, that is, in common society,—but for charity in its largest sense, that is, from a desire to do good to the bodies or souls of others. And now taking the words of my present text, I will show how this Christ-like employment is most suited to our state on earth, as one of humiliation, leading hereafter to glory : and how it specially

helps us to make that state happy, by enabling us to rid it of its carefulness, by casting all our care upon God, for He careth for us.

Half, and more than half, of the practical faults in the world, arise from looking upon life in a false view, and expecting from it what God does not mean us to find in it. It may be that many persons, when reading attentively our Lord's life, and studying his language, are greatly surprised at the absolute unworldliness of both of them. Little stress is laid upon common industry, or upon our duties to society, whether on a smaller scale or politically. Little or nothing is said of the pursuit of knowledge, or the benefit which mankind derive from a cultivation of the arts and sciences. Nay, in those well-known expressions in the Sermon on the Mount, telling us to take no thought for the morrow what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed, I doubt not but that many readers, if they would own the truth, are rather offended at his words, and are somewhat inclined to say, with the Jews of old, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" But he to whom all things future are as present, suited both his life and his words to what he knew would be ever the chief error of mankind. He knew that social and civil activity were sufficiently natural to man to need no encouragement: he knew that knowledge would be pursued, and arts and sciences cultivated.

But he knew that the kingdom of God and his righteousness would not be sought after ; he knew that men would look carefully enough on the things of this life, but would care for little beyond it. And, coming as he did to bring immortality to light, and to open the kingdom of heaven, he dwelt strongly upon the wholly different complexion which the opening of this prospect threw upon our earthly life, and how it changed it at once from a thing complete in itself, to a mere and most insignificant beginning of eternity ; how it made that so valuable which could help us forward to our real and eternal life, and that so trifling, when received in faith, which can but give joy and sorrow for a moment.

For ourselves then, and for our children, life is before us as a trial-time of uncertain length, but short at the longest, in which we may fit ourselves, if we will, for an eternal life beyond it. This is life to each of us, and this is our proper business ; all the rest that we do, or can do, however splendid, however useful, is, or should be, done only subordinately. We may be thankful to God when he makes our training for eternity consist in the doing great and useful actions in bringing forth much fruit ; but we, each of us, are doing our business as thoroughly, are answering as completely the purposes for which *we* were sent into the world, if we are laid for years of our life upon a bed of sick-

ness, incapable of any further action than that of glorifying God, and perfecting our own souls, by patient love. The welfare of nations, the improvement of the world on a large scale, are, if I may use such an expression, God's object and God's business; and thankful and happy we may be when, by the particular call of his providence, he chooses us to be his honoured instruments in accomplishing his work. But yet we should rejoice with trembling, lest, while thus engaged in what I have ventured to call God's peculiar work, we may chance to neglect our own; while preaching or ministering to, or enlightening, or governing others, we ourselves should be castaways. It is not, therefore, true that our great business or object in the world is to do all the good we can in it: our great business and object is to do God's will, and so to be changed through his Spirit into his image, that we may be fit to live with him for ever. His will is declared to us by the course of his providence, putting us into different situations of life where different duties are required of us; but these duties are duties because they are his will; and if performed without reference to Him,—if done for worldly objects only, be they ever so extensive and beneficial,—if done solely to improve mankind, and not to do the will of our heavenly Father—then our great business in life is left undone, and the most helpless sufferer who has

been bedridden for years, or the child who has been called away after the first opening of its heart to the love of God, has spent life better, and better answered the end for which he was born, than we.

And it is manifest, that to keep this end steadily in view is a wonderful means of ridding life of its carefulness. If to be useful in our generation simply, be our main object, our happiness cannot but greatly depend upon outward circumstances. Our own weakened health, the failure of our faculties, the decay of our worldly prosperity, the state of other men's minds, and the condition of public affairs, may at any time cripple our usefulness, and defeat our object at the very moment when we thought ourselves sure of obtaining it. And the prospect of death, in the vigour of his years, to a man engaged in some long and important work, which he feels would be useful to mankind if he could accomplish it, is one of the severest trials to him if he does not remember what his real business in life is, and when he may feel that it is accomplished. Most painful would it be to be taken away from the harvest when his hand was just upon the sickle, if he did not think who was the Lord of that harvest, and to whom it belonged to find the reapers for it. But when we do think of all this, and recollect what is indeed our real business here, we cast at once all our care

upon God, and resign ourselves contentedly to his disposal. Then we can never feel to die prematurely,—never think that our labour has been in vain in the Lord, how little soever may be the earthly fruit of it. Contented to live, and thankful to die, happy in having been the instrument of good, satisfied in the failure of his efforts that his work has yet not been thrown away, as far as concerns its main object, such a man is indeed taking life rightly, and all its changes, be they what they may, are to him working together for good.

Now it is with reference to this view of life especially that Christ's particular employment, the mixing with others, not for business or for pleasure, but to do them good, is so exceedingly useful. In direct personal intercourse with our neighbours, when this is borne in mind, every day's work is complete in itself,—every day secures actions for comfortable memory here, and for a blessed account hereafter. Here, in truth, we may feel that the word is very nigh us, in our mouth and in our heart, that we may do it. It is surprising how much pleasure may thus be given every day, how much suffering relieved, and how much good done. Unlike the more laborious enterprises of human life, where the previous time and exertion is often almost wasted, if we are by any circumstance hindered from completing them in these daily charities,

the seed is no sooner sown than the harvest is gathered, and the fruit stored away in security. In such a course of life, sufficient for the day is the good thereof, no less than the evil.

But now, it may be asked, how can we secure such a life? We are engaged in various worldly occupations, which are undoubtedly our immediate and most particular duties,—which take up the greatest portion of our time, and oblige us many times to provide for the future,—to live for much more than for the day. I said, in my former sermon, that we cannot, indeed, imitate Christ exactly in this point, but that we must find opportunity to do sometimes what he did always. The opportunities, of course, will vary greatly; and while, in some situations, like that of a clergyman with the care of a parish, Christ's employment may actually be ours, and our main business is just the same as his was,—yet in other professions and situations of life it is not so; and the opportunities for following his example must be carefully treasured up whenever they do occur, and multiplied by our own watchfulness. But, in whatever station or employment, we must find them or make them, if we would not deprive ourselves of what may well be called the salt of our daily living. We must, if we would keep ourselves unspotted from the world, acquaint ourselves with the dwellings of the poor. I do not say that we are all of us, and

especially the very young, to go to them always with spiritual addresses: all are not fitted to give medicine for the soul, any more than medicine for the body; and, to say nothing of the great disorder and irregularity of every man taking up the minister's part, there are a great many who would not at all know how to do it. But good may be done both to mind and body, and infinite good done to our own souls, without interfering either with the duty of the minister, or with that of the physician. To ourselves, it is a great benefit to learn really what poverty is,—to see how it is borne, and to think, as we must think, how hard we should find it ourselves to bear it. To the poor, on the other hand, nothing is more welcome, nothing more soothing, than the mere proof of our interest in them, and Christian regard to them. We need not go with alms always, and it is far better that we should not; but out of mere friendliness,—to vary the sameness of a life which has far less of variety and amusement than our own,—to listen to their stories,—to open their hearts to kindness, when the hardships of life may have well nigh utterly hardened them. Nor do I say that even this could be done generally with propriety by young boys here; but, at the same time, there is no boy so young as not to be concerned in what I have been saying: for, if not here, there is scarcely one of you who might not begin the practice of becoming acquainted

with the poor under the care of your friends at home ; and of thus learning, when here, to leave off every kind of wrong or insult to them, such as you know are sometimes committed. And certainly, as I said before, those among you of more age and experience might do more ; and, without stepping in the slightest degree beyond what is proper and becoming, you might find opportunities, even here, of doing in this manner, much good to others, and much, very much more, to yourselves.

But God does more for us even than this. He enables us, if we choose, to make a great deal even of our common intercourse with others,—an imitation of Christ's life, and an improvement to our souls. And here, at least, we all have our opportunities, unless we choose to neglect them. Even at the marriage feast at Cana, even at supper in the Pharisee's house, or when talking with the woman of Samaria, who came to draw water at Jacob's well, did Jesus glorify his heavenly Father. So too may we glorify him, not only in our visits to the poor, but in our intercourse with those of our own station ; not only in more solemn occasions, but in our business, and in our intercourse of common civility. At school, in your common dealings with one another, how much rudeness and unkindness, and encouragement of evil and discouragement of good, would instantly be done away, if as Christ was, so were you in this world ! How much hap-

piness would be occasioned, where there is now, perhaps, only uncomfortableness ; how many silent lessons of good would be conveyed, where evil is now taught so carelessly ! And, in later life no less, how much proud or angry excitement,—how much mortified feeling, or encouraged vice, or folly, would be softened, and soothed, and chastened down,—if we mixed with each other, in the common course of life, with something of the spirit of Christ ! As things now are, not only business but pleasure itself is often a weariness : we cannot take part in either without the tone of our minds being too often either hardened or irritated ; the peace of the Spirit is not with us when the work of the day is over. It is useless, and not altogether true, to say, that the fault of this is in others : others may be faulty, and, doubtless, are so ;—but how little would their faults affect us, if they were met by nothing bad within our own bosoms ! For even supposing our charity to be ever so lively,—if we felt even as Christ felt for the evil of others, and for the ruin which they were bringing on themselves by it,—and if we were wearied by it as he was, when he cried, “ O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you ? ”—yet still, this sorrow and this weariness are not inconsistent with that peace of the spirit which Christ gives, and which he himself declared to be far different from that which “ the world giveth.” It would be a

sorrow and a weariness that would rather turn us more heartily to God, than a restlessness which makes us shrink from him. It would only make us long the more for that rest that remaineth for the people of God, and not drive us back to wander after our own ways in this world's wilderness.

Such, then, is Christ's daily lesson to us : not to be idle and slothful in our work ; and to sanctify it by doing it as to him, and not as to man. Not to be idle,—as those who have mere bodily faculties, who live only to eat, and drink, and sleep ; not to be too busily and carefully engaged in our own labour, and still less for its own sake, as those who lived only for themselves, and for this world,—and to whom God, and Christ, and eternal life, had never been made known. Let us work earnestly,—for so did Christ ; but let us work also as doing God's will, and for the improvement of our own souls, or else our work will not be such as He will acknowledge at his coming.

SERMON XXV.

MARK vi. 31.

And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.

I AM now come to the conclusion of the subject which I have been dwelling on in my four last sermons. I said, that in the verse from which my present text is taken, there were three things deserving of our separate attention;—first of all, Christ's constant diligence and activity; “they had no leisure so much as to eat;” secondly, the nature of that employment: intercourse with other men, for the purpose of doing them good, in body or soul; and, thirdly, his thinking it right, from time to time, to have intervals of rest;—“Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.” And, with respect to this latter point, I said that we knew from other places, how our Lord employed these periods of rest; and that although, as partaking of the bodily weaknesses of our nature, he may be supposed to have needed

rest as we do, in its common and simplest sense, yet his conduct teaches us what further use may be made of such seasons, and how they may be improved to fit us for a renewal of work afterwards, by strengthening us, not only in body but in soul.

It is this last part of the subject which I have reserved for this present occasion ; and I confess that I did so purposely, because it suits our present circumstances so exactly, for just at this time there is one of these periods of rest going to commence for us ; and we may well consider how we may turn it to some account. Six weeks, even to the youngest of us, are a longer term than we can afford to waste ; they are a period, whose influence upon the character cannot go altogether for nothing. When I speak of not affording to waste them, I do not mean that we are wasting them if we are not going on in our common employments ; but we are wasting them utterly if we think that we have nothing else to do in them than to enjoy ourselves to the utmost ; if we fancy that we can safely dismiss all thoughts of duty, all recollection of the past, all regard for the future, and live as if all things around us would stand still while we were slumbering. Let us see how we may so sanctify the rest that is now coming to us, as that Christ may acknowledge it to be fit for his disciples ; how we may so pass it, as to make it no less useful to

us, in the highest sense, than any of our hardest hours of labour.

First, I will say plainly, that the period on which we are going to enter, is intended for our rest, in the simplest sense ; it is meant as a relief and relaxation from our common labour. According, then, to the degree of exertion that we may have made here, is our greater or less title to it ; for it is absurd to talk of rest where there has been no labour to call for it. In this sense, to those who have been idle here, it is like a pleasure which they have no right to ; a reward which they have not earned ; and which they are doubly bound to use well when they have got it, as their having it at all seems more than they deserve. I mean, that when a boy feels that he has been idle here, he must feel that it is foolish for him to talk about its being fair for him to enjoy himself when he is at home ; he must know, that, as a mere matter of fairness, he has no right to enjoyment, since he did not choose before to work. But it is not uncommon to hear even those boys who have done little or nothing when at school, speak as if they had earned their rest when at home, and as if they were hardly used, if called upon then to make any exertions : whereas, in truth, there are comparatively few who work so hardly here, as to *need* rest after it ; as we shall see at once, if we consider the far harder labour which persons of the same age, in other

situations of life, often have to endure. Indeed, even with those who work the hardest, the approaching period is more required for other objects, than as a mere rest from labour; and though, even in this respect, it is, no doubt, good for them, yet there are other ends answered, or which might be answered by it, to render it much more valuable.

It may be said, however, that if the labour of school cannot in most cases be considered very great, yet that school is altogether a place of hardship and irksomeness in one way or another, and that therefore it may fairly be varied with seasons of greater indulgence. It is certain this doctrine is very much acted upon, as many parents seem to think that a boy can never be too much humoured, or have too many amusements, when he is at home, to make up for the restraints and the uncomfatableness which he is supposed to endure at school. And the things in which this indulgence is sometimes shown, are precisely such as to confirm a boy in his worst habits :—I mean, indulgence in eating and drinking, and in indolence, or rather in laziness. There is something shocking in seeing so sacred a name as home degraded by such low associations as these ;—that it should be thought of as a place where a boy can get his appetite better pampered, and his laziness less disturbed. Some points indeed there are, in which

home is fairly and properly a place of greater indulgence; — things, which so far from being low or degrading in themselves, are absolutely in their proper degree useful; but which we cannot allow here, because, amongst so many, it is impossible to keep them to their proper degree only. For these, home is the fit place; and in this respect, one feels a pleasure in thinking that the restraints of school are taken off, because they can be taken off with propriety. But, besides these two sorts of home enjoyments, there is another which is, I believe, often keenly felt by young boys, and which may give us matter for useful reflection. In the two former cases, school cannot be different from what it is. We *ought not* to encourage boys in their love of eating and drinking, and in their indolence;—we *cannot* here allow many of those amusements which may very fitly be given them at home, because they can be there separated from their evil. But the third point in which home is often found to afford so keen a contrast to school, is one in which school might and ought to alter itself. I mean the change which a boy now too often feels in the general treatment and disposition of those around him, in going from school home, or in coming from home to school. At home a boy meets with nothing but kindness;—it is not always well-judged kindness indeed, but still it is

kindness ;—his feelings and his comfort, far from being needlessly hurt or interfered with, are perhaps sometimes overmuch consulted. It might be well, perhaps, if home and school could in this borrow something of each other ; if there was somewhat less of weak indulgence there, and less of roughness and want of consideration here. But our business is with ourselves ; with the faults of school, and not with the faults of home. In some instances, indeed, all the discomfort of school has arisen, not from any necessary or useful strictness in the system, but from what is absolutely bad and mischievous ;—I mean the unkindness and want of feeling among boys towards each other. It is my real belief, and it has often given me great pleasure to believe it, that there is as little of this evil here as anywhere ;—and that instances of gross cruelty and ill usage would be very contrary to the general practice and state of feeling here. Still we cannot flatter ourselves that we have nothing in this matter to correct ;—that there is not a good deal of coarseness and unkindness shown towards each other, which must make the contrast of the gentleness and kindness of home to many amongst us exceedingly delightful. I never can consider this as a light evil, let it be as common as it will : indeed, it is difficult to say, in whose case it is more injurious,—in his who is guilty of it, or in his who suffers from it. Undoubtedly, this is a matter in

which you ought all to keep a jealous watch over your own conduct: and every one of authority or influence amongst you ought to keep watch over that of others too. You are not indeed aware, perhaps, of all the pain which is given by it, and still less of the serious evil which it causes to the character. Impressions, at some periods of life, and in some minds, fade so quickly, that I verily believe many boys, when they are behaving with unkindness to others, absolutely forget how much they, a little while ago, suffered from the same treatment to themselves: and they have not perhaps thought or observed enough to know, how apt it is to harden the temper, and how a boy, finding himself teased, or laughed at, or ill-used, is driven at last, in a sort of self-defence, to check his own gentler and softer feelings, to answer ill usage with sullenness, and to endeavour to escape from the laughter of others, by turning it upon some new subject whose feelings are still more susceptible than his own.

In this, then, home may justly be considered a place of rest; and its influence upon the mind is often no less wholesome than it is delightful for the moment. And this leads me very naturally to consider the highest sense in which the approaching holidays may, and should be, a rest to us,—I mean, in the sense of rest from all those evils to which we are most exposed here. We know that “the rest

which remaineth for the people of God" is especially a rest from sin ;—a rest from evil without us, and still more from evil within our own hearts ;—a rest of happiness, because it is a rest of holiness. And the same was the higher object of the Jews' Sabbath,—and is the express and direct purpose of the Christian Sunday. Such, too, were those rests of our Lord, — such as that mentioned in the text ; not, of course, that our Lord had in his own heart any sin to rest from, — but that his rests were used spiritually ; were spent in prayer and communion with God, and that his human nature might be the more abundantly strengthened for his work as a prophet. For this purpose it is most useful that you should go for a time to a place which, generally speaking, is more favourable to your moral improvement than school is, where you may not only leave off for a while your daily work, but much more may be removed from many daily temptations to evil ; where you may not only enjoy more pleasure, but may get more good. You know full well in how many different ways opportunities are given you at home in a greater degree than here ; how all good is, in a manner, made more easy to you. There you have no temptations to lie, and swear, and indulge in offensive language : on the contrary, the influence of other company makes itself felt immediately ; and it is extraordinary how seldom a

boy is betrayed, when at home, into a single instance of the same bad language, which here may be quite habitual to him. There you have no temptation to unkindness, and little or none to bad company; but are amongst those whose behaviour to you is a continual provoking to love, and whose example, even though I well know how deficient the best human examples always are, is yet generally, as far as you are concerned, likely to be profitable. There, too, you have great opportunity for learning that duty on which I have lately dwelt so much—the duty of personal intercourse with the poor. And there, too, your religious exercises and feelings have far less to impede and thwart them, far more to encourage and cherish them. Here, if for a moment, whilst assembled in this place, a solemn impression is made on your minds, how apt is it to be dissipated so soon as you leave the chapel, by the very different society and language which immediately surround you! And let us do what we will, how can we render the Sunday evening here, such as you find it in a well-ordered family at home: when all the good thoughts that the public worship may have awakened in the morning are confirmed by the family worship in the evening; when the Lord's day proceeds from beginning to end in one consistent tenor, and pours its whole influence upon the mind unmixed with any alloy of evil! Surely, to such of you as have such homes,

this approaching time may be, indeed, a season of Christ-like rest—a season in which you may draw in strength of soul much more than of body, for the time of your return here. And even those whose home is far different from this picture, nay, if there be any so unhappy as even in your own household to have none to help you forward in the knowledge and love of God, yet even you will have some opportunities more than you enjoy here,—greater leisure with less of rude interruption; and even if you have no encouragement in good, you can, at least, dread no persecution for it. And remember, too, that this is a matter of life and death; and though, if your homes be so unhappily situated, your task is undoubtedly harder, yet still your salvation depends upon it; and the question is, not whether the path of good is easy or not, but whether we do tread it or no: this is the real question for this world, and for eternity.

And now briefly for all of us here assembled, who are going so soon to part, never to be all again here united, may we, if we are enjoying the prospect of our approaching rest, in the common sense of the word, take care to make it a spiritual rest also; to use it for our good, as well as for our refreshment. We expect that it will be pleasant, but that does not rest with us to determine; we may at any rate make it profitable, for that through Christ we can do if we will. Those of us who

return here, may return with a spirit strengthened and purified, to do God's will at school. Those who are going to enter on another sphere of duty may well need some such interval of Christian rest, to prepare for a new line of Christian labour. These intervals will not always come so readily and so free from care in more advanced life, even though we may need them more. Would that we may feel God's goodness in granting such to us in our peculiar line of life here! and let us all pray earnestly, that he will give us grace to avoid the double condemnation which awaits those to whom much is given, and at whose hands their Lord, when he comes to reckon, finds no return.

SERMON XXVI.

EPHESIANS v. 17.

*Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of
the Lord is.*

It is plain, that when the Apostle bade the Ephesians not to be unwise, he spoke of a want of wisdom which they might remove if they would : when he told them to be understanding, he spoke of something which they might get if they would : and we also can get it, unless we can show that our case is different from that of the Ephesians, and that what was within their power is, for some reason or other, not in ours. I do not suppose that any grown-up person, at least among the richer classes, would venture to plead such an excuse : they, at least, cannot pretend to have less means of understanding what the will of the Lord is, than were possessed by the Ephesians. But young persons of all classes, and grown-up persons amongst the very poor, may think, perhaps, that to them the excuse does apply. A poor man will often say that he is no scholar, meaning by that, that he

cannot understand about the things of Christ ; and a young person, whether rich or poor, will say that he is not old enough, and that added years are necessary before he can understand what the Bible wishes him to learn.

Now certainly this excuse, both in the case of the poor and in that of the young, is, to a certain degree, true. To a certain degree it is true, that they cannot understand the things of Christ ; that is, that if we take three persons equally well disposed, and of equal natural abilities,—the one a grown-up man who has been well educated, the second a poor man, and the third one who has not yet grown up to manhood,—it is very certain that there is a great deal in the Bible which the first will understand better than the other two. And so, if we could compare the understanding of spiritual things enjoyed by the very best and wisest Christian in the world, with that which the same person will gain when he shall see God face to face, the difference would be not like that of the other case, but something infinitely greater ; —greater, perhaps, than we can ever conceive, unless we shall be so happy as to experience it. But as a good man's understanding of God's will, though far less than it will be hereafter in heaven, is yet quite enough to light him on his way thither ; so, and in a much greater degree, is the knowledge to be

attained by the poor, or by the young, however in some respects inferior to that of others, yet quite as effectual as theirs to bring them to the kingdom of God through Christ Jesus.

To the youngest then, and to the poorest, we may use the words of St. Paul : “ Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” From the youngest, and from the poorest, Christ looks to find some fruit ; and if he finds none, the tree is ready to be cut down, and cast into the fire. They have, indeed, a great claim upon the assistance of all those who, from being richer or older, may be able to help them to understand more ; but even if this assistance be withheld, or unskilfully given, however great the fault may be in those who do not afford it, yet this is no excuse for those who have not received it : because, if they could not bring forth much fruit, still they could have borne some ; and where there is none at all, there will fall God’s judgment. And this I suppose to be our Lord’s meaning when he said, that he who knew not his lord’s will, and did commit things worthy of stripes, should be beaten with few stripes. We might expect rather, that if he knew not his lord’s will, he would not be beaten at all ; but Christ meant to show us that there is no such thing as a complete and helpless ignorance about our duty ; that a man may know little, it is true, but that

there is no one who knows nothing ; no one, in short, who knows so little as not to be deserving of punishment if he does not turn that little into more.

This is true to the utmost, as far as you are concerned : there is not one who hears me, let him be as young as he will, who might not understand the will of Christ better than he does ; there is none who does not understand it well enough to make him deserving of God's punishment, for not turning his knowledge to better account. When you come to this chapel, there is not one of you who is excusable for not attending to what he hears ; there is not one of you who could not derive good from it. It may not, indeed, be easy for us to make our addresses to you as plain or as forcible as we could wish ; and, assuredly, it is our duty to labour as much as possible, that the few minutes, for it is hardly more, during which we speak to you from this place, shall be turned to good account on our part ; but then, you must do your duty by yourselves, or else all that we can do for you is nothing ; you must try to learn, and to remember, and to put together what you hear. It is surprising how quick we learn things when we really go to work in earnest about them. Men thrown amongst foreigners, whose language they cannot understand, attend to every sound and look and

gesture ; by the look or the sign they try to make out what the sound means, and if they hear it again, they catch at it as at something which they know, because they have learnt it before : and so every little that they do learn, being remembered and applied in its proper place, helps them on to learn more. If you would do the same, even in a much lower degree, if you would but think, that what is read to you, or told you, is read and told in order to be remembered—that it ought to go into your minds, as so much secured for future use, and that when the time comes for using it, it is hard never to find it forthcoming,—you may depend upon it that what is read in this chapel, both the prayers, the lessons, and the sermons, would, in a short time, give you a very much fuller understanding than you now have of what the will of the Lord is.

But you have this understanding enough already to make you without excuse in the sight of God, if your lives bring forth no fruit. You have consciences within you, which tell you, in language which you cannot mistake, whether you are at peace with God or no. If this be not quite clear,—for I would be understood by the very youngest among you,—I will put it in another way. You can tell well enough whether you like coming to chapel, or no ; whether you like to hear about God, or to think of him, or to

pray to him. If you do not, cannot you tell why you do not? If you could not think of the answer to this question yourselves, at least you will see that it is the true one when you hear me mention it. I will tell you why you do not like it; because you do not really believe how God loves you, and what he has done for you. It is nothing but this: for if you really did believe that God was a dearer friend to you than all your relations,—that Jesus Christ has done more for you than they have, or ever could do,—and that God will give you better things than ever you have received, or can receive, from any one else,—it is quite certain that you would like very much to hear of him, and to pray to him: for praying to him is nothing else than speaking to him: and every one loves to speak to his best friend. Believe that God loves you, that he is more to you than father and mother,—and that when you go home to him, it will be infinitely more happy for you, than the happiest home to which ever boy returned from school,—and you would be as sure to love thinking and talking of him, as you do now love to think and talk of the pleasures of your earthly home, when you are for a while released from school.

But you have seen your earthly home, and your earthly parents;—you know what its pleasures are, and what their love is; but of God and of heaven you can fancy nothing. True it is, indeed,

in one sense, that neither you nor I (for in this we are all of us alike) can fancy distinctly the happiness of our eternal home, or the nature of our heavenly Father. It is natural to wish that we could. The Apostles wished it, when Philip said to Christ, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us;"—the greatest of the Prophets wished it, when Moses said to God, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." But this never has been granted, and never may be: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared for them that love him;" and the eternal Father, who dwelleth in light unapproachable, no man hath seen or can see. So then, this difference must remain between our earthly and our heavenly homes,—our earthly and our heavenly Father,—that the one we have seen, and can conceive; the other we have not, neither can we. You know that the Bible speaks much of faith: and this is the very meaning of faith,—to believe in and hope for that which we do not yet see or enjoy. But are there not pleasures of older life, even in this world, which you cannot now understand, but which you know are pleasures, and very real ones, because you see older persons heartily enjoying them? You cannot enjoy nor understand these pleasures now, but you will when you are older: so that there may be very great and very real happiness prepared

for you, which you cannot at present at all conceive. And thus much in general:—but, to say the truth, something of the happiness of heaven, the very youngest of you can conceive, better perhaps than even some of the pleasures of advanced years in this world. I will hope and believe, that every one of you has known some few happy moments in the course of his life, when he has felt the pleasure of sincerely endeavouring to be good;—when, not only no bad passion was awake within him, but he was actually aware of the strong workings of good ones;—when he felt to love every one, and to try with all his heart to be what he ought to be. And if I am not mistaken, the moments when we have felt thus have been very often when we have committed some fault, and have been brought to a proper sense of it;—when we have been fully forgiven, and our hearts have been softened at once by the reproof and the pardon. I do think that every one of us, at some one time in his life, has been in this happy state; and I should believe that the remembrance of it would rise within him, as of the greatest happiness that he ever knew. Now, in feeling thus, I may say it with reverence, we have felt for one little while something, in a very low degree, of that happiness which reigns in heaven for ever. That sincere turning away from sin, and longing after goodness,—that opening of the heart to all soft and

kind affections, when we feel that we have been heartily forgiven,—that forgetfulness of self, and deep consciousness of love, which marked the moment of repentance, however soon they again vanished, — these are among the pleasures of heaven ; and of these we have all,—I believe that I may say it, all,—at some time or other in our lives, tasted the sweetness.

But then God,—He who is all in all in heaven, —him we have not seen nor can conceive : how then can we love him ? If I were speaking to heathens, I should say, look round upon the works of his hands ;—this most beautiful world, with all the millions of creatures to whom he has given life, and breath, and all things ; with all the host of heaven, who move through infinite space, in obedience to his laws. I would say, read the lives and the words of good and wise men ; see how good and noble thoughts have struggled victoriously against temptation ; how self-denying virtue has wrought its perfect work, abundantly supported and blest, though all outward things were against it. I would say, look at these images, imperfect as they are, of God's power, and wisdom, and goodness ; and think, from these faint shadows, how blessed it must be to know the substance. But I am not speaking to heathens, and I need not refer to these shadows ; not to the outward world ; not to the faint and most imperfect image of Him set forth by

human virtue. We have got a truer likeness of him, a perfect image: all the glory, all the goodness of God is revealed to us in the person of Christ. Have we been so long time with him, and yet have we not known him? He who hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father: how say we then, Show us the Father? Yes, in that life,—in those words,—in that blessed death and glorious resurrection,—there is the image of God revealed to us: he who hath the Son, he who knoweth the Son, he who loves him, the same knows God, and loves him, and is loved by him.

And are you too young to understand this, too young to love God in Christ, too young to desire the happiness of heaven? No, not too young; and God grant that you be not too sinful; for, believe me, it is nothing but your sin that hinders you from understanding, and not your youth, or your want of ability. No, you are not too young; and you cannot, surely, be too hardened. Pray with me,—pray for me and for yourselves,—that we may none of us be too dull or too cold to understand what the will of the Lord is; none too hard to love him and be loved by him.

SERMON XXVII.

JOHN xi. 11.

Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

As, in every thing else, men's tastes are different, so are they also with regard to the Scriptures. I mean, that amongst Christians,—all looking upon the Scriptures as their rule of faith and life,—there are particular passages which will most suit the wants of particular minds, and appear to them, therefore, full of an extraordinary measure of comfort and of wisdom. I am speaking, however, of persons who are in earnest, and not trying to cheat their own souls : for there may be persons who are most fond of the very parts which they need least,—that is to say, of the parts which condemn the faults to which they themselves are least inclined ; and who turn away from those which contain a medicine for their own particular disease. But, let a man deal with himself truly ; let him know, as who does not know if he will but inquire, what are his own weaknesses, and what are the spiritual weapons which he most

needs; and then he will be better able to direct himself in reading the Bible profitably, than any other person can direct him.

So there are parts which one man may pass over lightly, and which to another may seem to be full of most particular beauty. And though he must not expect others to see in them all that he does,—nor make his own interpretation that which all others must follow,—yet as some may think and feel with him, and no man can be harmed with hearing another's views of the riches of God's word, if he does not seek to strain it into something foolish or mischievous, so I will venture to lay before you some of the thoughts which the words of the text have been apt to awaken in my own mind,—coming as they do from a part of the Scripture which seems to me one of the richest of all in wisdom, in comfort, and in raising our affections to God and to Christ.

“ Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,” said our Lord : “ but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.” There seems to me to be contained in these few words one of the most powerful charms in the world to lull the bitterness of death, and to make us anxious to become such as that we may humbly venture to apply them to ourselves. What would we, each of us, give, when our last hour was come, to feel that Christ would so speak of us? “ Our friend sleepeth ; but I go, that I may awake him

out of sleep.” Yet this is the language in which Christ does speak of every one who has died in his faith and fear,—in which he will speak of us, if we do not so live as to shut ourselves out from his salvation.

“ Our friend sleepeth.” How much is there in these three simple words ! Christ speaks of Lazarus as his friend : and St. John tells us that he loved him and his sisters. But the title is not reserved for Lazarus only : “ Ye are my friends,” he says to his Apostles, “ if you do whatsoever I command you.” It is not because they ate and drank with him, and went about with him : if it were, we could not, indeed, hope that the title would belong to us. But they were his friends, if they did whatsoever he commanded them ; and this we can do now as entirely as they could. Christ, therefore, will call us his friends, as much as he did his first twelve disciples, as much as he did Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. He told one of his Apostles, when he expressed his belief in him after his resurrection, that he, indeed, because he had seen him, had believed ; but blessed were they who had not seen, and yet had believed. If there be a difference, then, his promise is almost more gracious to us than to those who saw and knew him on earth ; we may be sure, that if we do whatsoever he commands us, he will quite as much call us his friends as he did them.

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.” The disciples could not understand that, by this gentle term, he could possibly mean a thing so fearful as death. They thought that he meant to speak only of sleep literally ; insomuch that Christ was obliged to express himself in other words, and to tell them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.” And in this we are all of us very like the disciples. We talk of another life, when we think it at a distance, but we have really got but a very little way towards overcoming our fear of death. We fear it very nearly, if not quite as much, as the Heathen do. And this is so natural, that no mere words will ever get the better of it, unless we put ourselves in time into such a state of mind as may help us to see that the words are really nothing else but simply true. It is not by reading or repeating the words of Christ, that we can at once make them the food of our souls and derive from them their full benefit. But still here is the fact, that Christ does call the death of his friends a sleep ; and the same expression is used more than once by his Apostles and first disciples, in speaking of the deaths of true Christians. We may learn to make our own death such as to deserve the name ; we may, with God’s blessing, even feel ourselves that it does deserve it. And this, without any distinction as to the manner of it, so far as regards its sharpness or easiness to the body.

We know not, indeed, how Lazarus died, whether it was by a death painful or easy; but we do know how Stephen died, of whom it is said, no less than of Lazarus, that "he fell asleep." We know that his death was sudden and violent :—with much suffering of body,—and nothing, as far as human aid was concerned, to comfort his mind. He died, surrounded by his enemies, who looked upon him as a criminal and a blasphemer, and, as such, had no pity or sympathy for him. And yet, when he died, "he fell asleep;"—all the bodily pain,—all the want of human sympathy and comfort,—all the suddenness of the wrench from life, in the midst of health and strength,—all this shall not prevent the Christian's death from deserving no harsher name than that of sleep.

But what follows? "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." May we believe Christ to say these words over every one of us, so soon as the breath is departed from our body: "He comes to awake us out of sleep." The time will seem no longer than the four days which passed before he awakened Lazarus: a thousand years are in his sight as but one day; and when we have once done with earthly time, we may, perhaps, be able in some degree to reckon years as he does. But, assuredly, whatever be our state in the interval, we shall have no consciousness of his tarrying: the weariness

of expectation, the longings of hope deferred, will have ended then for ever. He comes as in a moment, to awake us out of sleep ; to a waking, which it is our best wisdom to endeavour humbly to dwell upon, however infinitely our highest aspirations may fall short of its reality. An end will then be put for ever to all those lingerings of unbelief which are here, perhaps, never altogether rooted out. God, whom we have sought after in some measure darkling ;—whose presence, even in the best men, sometimes leaves them without any consciousness of it ;—God and Christ will then be for ever with us, and we shall for ever feel that we are with them. Of all the thoughts that may rush into a Christian's mind, when at his last hour he utters his Lord's words, and says, " It is finished," — of all the evil to which he then bids an everlasting farewell,—none would be remembered, I should imagine, with such deep joy and thankfulness at having escaped it, as our dark and imperfect sense of God, and of his love to us : no change will be so blessed, as that from seeing him in a glass darkly, to the seeing him face to face.

I know that to young minds these thoughts are but little familiar ; it seems strange to them to talk of leaving their earthly life when they are but just beginning it : and if such thoughts could only be felt when life in its natural course

were drawing to an end, or when its sorrows had made us wish that it were so, then indeed it would be vain to press them upon you in the midst of youth and hope and enjoyment. But there is no falser slander against the truth of God, than to represent those only as longing after, or dwelling upon their eternal inheritance, who, whether from years or from misfortune, have nothing more left to hope for here. By far the happiest persons I have known, and the experience of most other persons would, I think, say the same,—by far the happiest, both in their own minds and in their outward circumstances, with most blessings to enjoy in life, and hearts and spirits most alive to the enjoyment of them, have been persons, to whom, as far as man can judge of man, the consciousness of their eternal inheritance was most continually present, and the prospect of being with God most intensely welcome. They had no more reason to think death near than you have ; for you must be well aware that the charms of life are quite as strong in middle age as in early youth ; and it is not more natural to think of the decay of our faculties when we are possessing them in all their vigour, than when they are not yet fully matured. In fact, the thoughts which I have dwelt on are the fit companions of our journey through life, and the earlier we take them up, the better. They must teach us to live first, or they will never teach us

to die : and he who thinks them fit only for a period of sickness, or sorrow, or for old age, is but putting them off to the very time when he will find it the hardest to derive any comfort from them.

For what is it, brethren? “ Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” They are, indeed, words of great comfort, words which it would be worth more than the value of all earthly things, that Christ should speak of each one of us when we are departed. But then, they are words, which, if you were indeed near your latter end, it would be impossible to utter without the deepest fear and sorrow. What good would there be, in putting before you the picture of a blessing which you had forfeited ; of reminding you of the happiness of that fortune which you had determined should not be your own? If you thought yourselves very near death, I do not say that these words could profit you nothing ; but I may say, that, in all probability, they would be useless : doubtless, they might alarm you ; they might make you think what provision you had made for your last great change ; whether, indeed, you might dare to hope that Christ would speak of you, when dead, as of his friend who had fallen asleep, and whom he was presently coming to awaken. You might and would find, that your lamps were gone out, and would be anxious to lose no time in getting a fresh supply of oil. “ But while they

went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they who were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.” They who *were ready* went in with him; not they, who, when it was too late, were trying to become so. Believe me, in those late turnings to God, death is apt to come quicker than repentance: you would be called to meet Christ as your Judge, ere you could venture to think that you might love him as your Saviour: I say, “ere you might venture to think that you might love him as your Saviour,” for we cannot love him as such, till we learn to hate our sins; and this is far too hard a task to be learnt by enfeebled faculties, which, in so many years of their vigour, had been only learning and practising to love them. But to you, to all of us, I trust, here assembled, the words are not spoken too late. We may now make Christ our friend; nay, he entreats and calls upon us to suffer him to be so. We may yet make our death a sleep, however sudden it may be, however deserted, however painful. We may yet so fall asleep in Christ, that we shall assuredly share in the promise which he made to Lazarus: he will come and awaken us out of sleep, that we may be where he is for ever.

SERMON XXVIII.

LUKE xvi. 8.

The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

It is a remarkable story told by the poet Cowper of himself, that when he was a young man, and living in London, where his companions were not only persons of profligate life, but of low and ungodly principles, they always had a great advantage over him when arguing upon the truth of Christianity, by reproaching him with the badness of his own life. In fact, it appears that his life at that time was quite as bad as theirs; and they used to upbraid him for it, telling him, that it would be well for him if they were right and he wrong in their opinions respecting the truth of the Gospel; for if it were true, he certainly would be condemned upon his own showing.

We must not indeed call a man of evil life one of the children of light in the highest sense of

the term; and yet in the sense in which our Lord uses it in the text, it does apply to any one who believes in his inward mind, that his obedience is due to Christ, however little his outward conduct may agree with such a belief. They are children of light as far as God's mercy is concerned:—they have been chosen by him to receive the knowledge of his Son; they have been called, and their understandings at least have listened to the call. They are children of light then in God's gracious purposes,—called, enlightened, redeemed;—what more could have been done to the vineyard that has not been done in it? but their own will makes them in the end the children of darkness; they are foolish persons, who take their lamps, but take no oil with them: they are the vine of God's husbandry,—planted, watered, fenced about from every enemy, and open to the full sunshine of his love; but when he looks that they should bring forth grapes, they bring forth wild grapes. These are the children of light of whom Christ speaks;—and well might he say, that the children of this world are in their generation far wiser.

This was what Cowper's unbelieving companions thought, when they taxed him with the folly and inconsistency of living like a Heathen, and yet professing to believe as a Christian. They, on the other hand, were consistent enough: they believed of nothing more than this world, and

accordingly they lived for this world only. But as far as this world was concerned, the happiness which they believed to be within their reach, they did their best to gain;—the misery which they supposed to threaten them, they did their best to avoid. These men, like the unjust steward in the parable, had at least the merit of acting wisely upon their own view of the matter; they made the mammon of unrighteousness, that is, the riches and enjoyments of this world, serve their turn for all that they believed them capable of yielding. And, therefore, Christ makes their conduct a reproof to Christians, who do not make the world yield to them that fruit, which, according to their professed belief, it might afford them. So much are we accustomed to admire consistency of character, an adherence to principles, an acting uniformly and steadily on one regular system of conduct, that these qualities in vulgar estimation even throw a lustre upon crime, and have caused some of the most wicked men that the world has ever seen to be accounted amongst the greatest.

But if their presence almost seems to render vice respectable, what shall we say of the character in which they are wanting? and much more when it is the very character which would set them off, no less than be set off by them—a character in which their influence would be nothing but unmixed good? If consistency with our principles be in

some sort admired even when they are evil,—if forethought cannot but exalt a human being, even when employing evil means to arrive at an evil end,—how can we excuse inconsistency and blind thoughtlessness, when the principles which we swerve from are those of mere goodness;—when the end which our forethought might compass, and the means for attaining it, are alike pure and spotless? This is the lesson which the parable of the unjust steward was designed to teach us, that nothing is more unworthy, nothing more ruinous, than to be a Christian by halves;—to begin to build, and not be able to finish. Salt is good, but the salt that has lost its savour is good neither for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out: and even so vile and worthless is that Christian, in name only, who does not live according to his own principles but in defiance of them,—who, with a journey to an eternal state opened before him, plays away his time on the road, and makes no provision for the end of his pilgrimage.

We may be still the children of light; but, if we so live, we are fast hastening to make ourselves the children of darkness: we are chosen by God to be the heirs of glory, but we ourselves choose rather to be the heirs of folly and destruction. And it is this conduct which, as I said before, the parable was designed to reprove. It

reproves it by showing that the opposite to this careless folly,—the habit of laying down a settled principle for our living, of acting steadily according to this principle, and of taking care beforehand that our chosen object in life shall never be lost to us,—that this habit, even when the principle is no better than self-interest, when the practice is wickedness, and the forethought for the security of our darling object is nothing but dishonesty and cunning,—still, is in itself so elevating, that even when thus grossly misapplied, it after all commands from ordinary men a considerable portion of respect. “The master of the unjust steward commended him because he had done wisely :” just as the language of common history commends the unjust stewards on a larger scale, who have steadily pursued, through all dangers and difficulties, the several objects of their ambition and vain glory. It is this steadiness of aim, this consistency between principles and practice, this range of forethought, this unwearied and undaunted perseverance, whose presence seems to make vice almost respectable ;—whose absence makes,—I do not say virtue, for virtue cannot exist without it,—but mere good dispositions, good inclinations, and a knowledge of our real condition and duty, no better than contemptible and worthless.

I have purposely dwelt upon this subject with something of repetition, because experience has

taught me that this one parable of our Lord's is to many a stumbling-block, and to few so useful as it ought to be. People seem to fancy that the unjust steward is held up as an object of imitation altogether;—that Christ himself excuses his dishonesty for the sake of the wisdom of his conduct, as it is called;—that is, his steady regard to his own interests. Some of this arises from a mere mistake, and something also from an obscure, and therefore a bad translation. If those who have Bibles will just refer to the parable for an instant, they will be able to follow me better. In the eighth verse, where it says, “And the lord commended the unjust steward,” &c.,—some careless readers fancy that the “lord” means Christ;—whereas this verse is only a part of the story or parable; Christ telling us that “the lord or master of the unjust steward commended him,” according to that common matter of fact to which I have already alluded, that men do often commend clever wickedness. Christ's own application of the story begins in the next, or ninth verse;—and here the translation is obscure, because the little word “of” in our common language now has another meaning from that which it had in the translator's own time. “To make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,” an English reader naturally understands to mean, “to make the mammon of unright-

cousness," or "unrighteous riches" our friends ; whereas, the real meaning of the words is, "Make to yourselves friends with, or by the mammon of unrighteousness ;" — *i. e.* "so use the riches and other advantages of this world, as that they may gain you friends hereafter, — friends that will stand by you, when the riches themselves shall have perished." And I hardly need add what these friends are,—the record of good done upon earth, of misery relieved, of folly enlightened, of virtue encouraged and supported;—the record of *their* thankful voices, who, having received from us good things in this world, shall welcome us with thanks and blessings, when we all stand together before Christ's judgment-seat.

Such then is the parable ; and, indeed, I scarcely know any one throughout the New Testament whose lesson we need more strongly. It is the repetition of the complaint of Elijah : "How long halt ye betwixt two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him ; but if Baal, then follow him." If there be no God, no duty, no life to come, — then let us eat and drink, or follow what likes us best whilst we are here, for to-morrow we die. But if we do believe that there is God,—if we know that duty is the very soul and life of our life,—if we hope to be for ever where Christ is gone to prepare a place for us,—then let us live consistently with these principles,

and live not for our own pleasure, but for his who died for us and rose again. Always and everywhere as this requires to be enforced, it requires it nowhere more strongly than here. Here, what wickedness there is, is *inconsistent* wickedness;—it is the folly, the guilty and the miserable folly, of those who are now children of light, and are fast making themselves the children of darkness. The dreadful consistency of thorough evil, wicked principles leading naturally and deliberately to a wicked life,—the serving Baal, because you believe in Baal,—the disobeying Christ because you have resolved that he shall not be your Saviour,—all this is as yet, I believe, far from you. If things be as I imagine, the expression of blasphemous opinions amongst you would be received with horror: and if there were a single individual among you who cherished such in his heart, he would probably find it his interest, for his own credit's sake, to conceal them. As yet, then, God speaks to you as to his children:—as yet, you are his redeemed, with whom he shows all long-suffering and patience, entreating them to stand fast, and not to throw away the everlasting shelter which his love has provided for them. As yet, you are his redeemed: take heed that you do not become his enemies. Take heed that you do not, like Cowper, give an unbeliever just cause to say, that

it is greatly for your interest that he should be right and you wrong,—for if your belief be right, you have nothing to expect but eternal misery. Think you that this notion will have no effect upon you? that it will be possible for you to go on long with the consciousness that it is your interest,—it is a dreadful thing to utter, but so it would be, —with the consciousness that it is your interest—to wish and believe Christianity to be a lie? No; it is impossible to go on long in such a state: the end is and must be one of three things; conversion,—a hardened and unbelieving heart,—or madness. One of the three must follow, whenever the contrast between what we believe to be true and our own evil lives, which practically deny it, is steadily presented before us. You know that, in Cowper's case, where there was a weakness of bodily constitution unable to bear such a struggle, the end was conversion,—but not without the horrors of madness: he was saved,—but so as by fire. In common cases, where the bodily frame is stronger, the conflict is settled, one way or the other, before the mind is utterly distracted by its continuance: it settles either into the peace of God, or the peace of death. But let me not be misunderstood: it may be the peace of God, and yet not perfect peace, and far less peace that shall never again be broken; it may be the peace of death, and yet not un-

troubled with occasional alarms and warnings, and not, therefore, beyond the possibility of being broken in time, ere the last trumpet shall scatter it to the winds for ever. But it is the peace of death, when men have quieted their consciences as to their daily living, without having their lives reformed according to the Spirit of Christ. It is the peace of death when men put the Scriptures from them habitually, and either leave off their devotions altogether, or continue them as an unmeaning form. They may not have said to themselves, "There is no God:" but they have managed to say it practically: for, without longing to become like God, or caring to please him, they are not disturbed by the fear of his anger. They may attend Christian worship, and speak respectfully of Christianity; but its realities are no realities to them; they set aside the question of salvation, as a thing which they do not like to enter upon. And thus they live in ordinary times peacefully enough: but if danger comes near them, either personally or to the state of society around them,—if they have reason to think that death is near,—then they find their peace troubled: it is not proof against all assaults; it must be secured not only by setting aside the Gospel of Christ, but by trampling it under foot. The neutral state is no longer possible: the question is brought to an issue; and they, who

have hitherto not been the friends of Christ, are tempted to become his open enemies; they, who hitherto have not thought of his Gospel, now boldly deny and revile it. So, on the other hand, with those who are living in the peace of God,—I call it the peace of God, when a man, having endured for a time the struggle between his sins and God's will, is enabled by the Holy Spirit to end it, by making his sins give way to his principles; by altering his heart and life, in conformity to his Saviour's image. Then the man is justified and sanctified, and, in St. Paul's strong language, confidently anticipating that what has so well begun, will end no less happily, he is saved. But St. Paul himself explains his meaning, by saying, that "he is saved in hope," not actually: and where there is hope there must be uncertainty, and there may be fear. The sins that were overcome will rise again to the struggle; or, as life goes on, and older years bring other temptations, it will not be the sins which he once overcame, and which he may more easily conquer again, from having conquered them once already; but it will be others, whose strength he has not yet tried; an appeal to passions within him, of whose force he never till now had cause to be aware. And here is the need of watchfulness and prayer, that such a danger may never find us unprovided; never find us without a just suspicion of our own weakness; never without a deep and lively know-

ledge of our Redeemer's strength. But, at any rate, the peace of our hearts is broken ; and struggles and dangers, for a time at least, interrupt it. Nor may we be sure that it will be only for a short time ; it may go on for years : not so, indeed, as that our peace is altogether lost, or that we are ever tempted to wish God's word untrue ; but yet, so as that our perceptions of its truth may be less keen ; and though our will to subdue our sins to Christ be unvaried, and its efforts continual, yet it may always find it opposed by the law in our members, and sometimes be overcome by it. Surely if it were not so, St. Paul would have had no need to bid us put on the whole armour of God ; for armour cannot be wanted if we are never to go into battle.


I have gone on to things in life far beyond what your experience has yet reached to :—nay, inasmuch as I have carried forward my thoughts to the very end of our earthly course, I have anticipated my own experience also. But so it is,—that when we have reached the top of the hill, we can look down it before us as well as behind us,—and while the ascent is yet fresh in our recollections, if not actually in our sight, we can see the path by which we have to go down to the conclusion of our journey. Nor can the map, if I may so call it, of any part of the journey of life, be without its uses to you, by whom, in the natural course of things, it must all be travelled over. Would to God, that while your

age yet renders it impossible for you to be settled in the peace of death, you might shelter yourselves in the peace of God ; that, being children of light, you would walk as such ; that, having everlasting habitations prepared for you, you would early prepare yourselves, by an entire turning to God, for entering into them.

ADDRESS BEFORE CONFIRMATION.

ALTHOUGH it is very true that where great stress is laid upon any one particular crisis in our spiritual life, and where a strict preparation has been made for it, the effect, as soon as it is over, is often exceedingly shortlived, and people, feeling themselves in a manner released from something that was hanging over them, run wild with even the greater eagerness, in consequence of their late restraint: although there be this danger attending any unwonted effort, if made too violently, and especially in matters that concern our souls, yet as no good is to be done without such an effort, and as it need not be overstrained or excessive, so I think that the preparation for confirmation may be of the greatest use to you, and I would not lose this opportunity of turning it, so far as I can, to your lasting benefit.

I take it for granted, that of the uses and duties of confirmation in general, you must have some tolerable notion, from what has been said to you



about it, and from what you have read yourselves. That you are now, in a manner, beginning again your Christian course, with the promises of the Gospel again personally addressed to you, and a renewed call to you, to be disposed in heart and mind to live as believing them, you will have learnt already : and I need not now repeat it to you. What I wish to do, is to speak of confirmation as it concerns you who are now here assembled, in the particular situation in which you are placed, some of you being very shortly to enter upon the business of active life, or on a state of more immediate preparation for it ; and the greater part being likely still to continue for a time exposed to the peculiar temptations of a school, and having to discharge its peculiar duties.

And for the first of these two classes, there is no promise in the Scripture which is more certainly confirmed by experience, than where Christ has told us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and that, then, all other things shall be added unto us ; that is, that the surest way to earthly happiness, as well as to that which comes after death, is to begin life and to go through it with steady Christian principles. I do not mean by Christian principles, a firm profession of belief in the Christian religion ; still less, a respect, however sincere, for the church and its institutions. Officers of the Army and Navy have, I fear, on this point,

often fatally deceived themselves : they think sometimes, that in their profession, if they are regular in attending and enforcing the attendance of their men at divine service on a Sunday,—if they avoid swearing and profane language, and try to keep up respect to religion and its ministers amongst those under their command or influence,—they may safely consider themselves as true Christians. But he is a Christian, who, for the love of Christ, and with prayer for the help of Christ's Spirit, struggles against the besetting temptations of his particular calling. And in the world in general, but most especially in the Army and Navy, the great and besetting temptation is to prefer the praise of men to the praise of God, and to dread the reproach of men more than the reproach of God. Where this feeling is not earnestly struggled with, it obtains in a short time such a dominion, that we shall certainly act in every point as it leads us. The most degrading personal cowardice is not so complete a bondage as the cowardice which fears to be called coward. The most timid man alive would be ashamed to say, and to accustom himself to think, that if he were placed in a situation of danger he must fly from it. However fearful his nature, he would struggle against his weakness, and pray earnestly, and earnestly labour, that if he were to be tried with severe pain and danger, they might not overpower his firmness; and there are many

instances of persons, constitutionally timid, thus bracing themselves, and being supported by God ; so that their resolution has endured amidst the most appalling dangers and the most fearful torments. But moral cowardice,—or the fear of what man can do, not to kill the body, but to inflict shame and insult on the mind,—men do not scruple to confess that they would yield to. They will expose their own lives, and risk taking away the lives of others, in personal quarrels, because they have been accustomed to set such a value on the good opinion of the world, that the temptation of dishonour is one which they are not strong enough to resist.

For those, then, who are soon going to enter upon active life, the most earnest prayer that I would urge them to make to God, on this solemn occasion, is, that he would enable them to overcome this most fearful temptation, the dread of the censure or dishonour of the world. In our state of life, Christ's solemn warning may be most profitably altered in word that we may most effectually preserve its spirit. We do not now so much need to be told, "Fear not them who kill the body : " bodily sufferings in the path of our duty are no longer our worst dangers ; Christ now says to us, Fear not them who can vex the mind and feelings with dishonour and insult for a few short years, and after that have no more that they can do ; but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear : fear Him who

is able to cast you into the lowest pit of shame and dishonour for ever, yea, I say unto you, fear Him.

In truth, however, if, on your first entrance into life, you follow Christ in sincerity and without affectation, your path will be spared this severe trial. Even the world respects a man who is a consistent Christian, and allows that he should act in his own way, and from his own motives. At any rate, whatever trial you have to encounter, will be chiefly at the very beginning. Before a young man is thoroughly known, his Christian principles and practice may be suspected of hypocrisy; but it depends upon himself how long the suspicion may last. You will confirm it most seriously if your principles are seen to be strict on points which you have no inclination for, but lax in the case of your own favourite tastes. If a timid man, who is passionate in his language, and licentious in his life, first provokes a quarrel by the violence of his tongue, and then endeavours to get out of it, by speaking of the sin of fighting, it is manifest, that he would very naturally be thought a coward, who only made his principles a cloak to save him from what he did not like, not a restraint to curb himself from indulging in those vices which he did like. And another great protection to the principles of a young man, is to connect himself closely with Christian friends. Two

men of the same age, intimate with one another, and both in earnest in their desire to please God, are a strength and support to each other, of incalculable value. A larger number of such friends becomes still more invincible to temptation, and, to say nothing of other advantages, should our acting steadily on Christian principles ever expose us to the ridicule or contempt of the world, how greatly is such a trial lessened, when those whom we most love and value continue to honour and respect us, because their estimate of life is the same with our own !

I may seem to have been long upon this subject ; but what I have said is in truth the great lesson of life, and a few minutes need not be grudged to hearing it. It is this too in which you most need confirmation ; for in your struggles against common vices, the world itself will help you ; in condemning idleness, and meanness, and falsehood, and unkindness, and ill-nature, the world and the Gospel are agreed. It is to run the race of Christians that you are now preparing ; and that must needs be most difficult, where not the flesh only, but the world, are united to obstruct it. So, too, for those among you who are still to continue here some time longer ; your danger is greatest, and your need of confirmation, or the help of God, is most urgent, where the world in which you live exercises its influence against

your progress. To you I need not speak of the vices of meanness and ill-nature, for even the voice of the world in which you live condemns these. But as the world of men is far less pure than the Spirit of God, so the opinion of the world of boys is even less pure than that of men. Idleness, which in after life is despised, is, perhaps, rather encouraged by the voice of that society in which you are now living: selfish extravagance, and the practice of incurring debts, too lightly censured in manhood, are here, I fear, scarcely censured at all. The plain common-sense notion, that your interest and mine are, in fact, the same;—that school regulations are not laid on, or enforced, out of a petty love of power, or moroseness, and that, therefore, it is all fair to evade them, but are intended solely to train and accustom you to do what a few years hence you would be ashamed not to do;—that the principles and feelings which I wish to inspire amongst you are but those in which all good men have lived and died, and in which, by God's blessing, I hope to live and die myself;—this plain way of looking at your present state, and the views of conduct which would follow it, are not yet established amongst you. The fact is, that public opinion, in schools, is in many points the opinion exactly of the most worthless members of them, which they spare no pains to enforce, and to which the well disposed yield out

of weakness. Indeed, if we could ever safely or innocently wish for one evil to cast out another, I should almost say, that a boy, when placed at a public school, would find pride a most valuable safeguard to his principles: he would then scorn to be led blindly in the track of others; he would look with disgust and contempt upon the low principles which he has heard advanced around him, and the low practice which flowed from them. But what pride could not do without causing other evils at the same time—uncharitableness towards others, and a dangerous satisfaction in ourselves—that the Spirit of Christ, whose aid will be tomorrow in a particular manner implored for you, will enable you to do in meekness and in tenderness. If you examine your own hearts and lives by the light of the Scripture, you will find cause enough to make you humble for yourselves and indulgent to others: but if you strive, also, to walk by the light of the Spirit, you will be bold and decided in thinking for yourselves, and in doing what you yourselves approve, without caring for the opinion of your companions. And as the public opinion among boys, as well as men, is swayed by the influence of decided characters, so two or three individuals, steadily and quietly acting as they think right, will, in a short time, be like a leaven, to leaven the whole mass: they will win over to their side that number in all societies,

who follow the turn of the stream; and the bad will be left in that state in which it is our hope that they may be hereafter in the universe—a minority of unmixed evil.

Therefore I would say to all of you, if you wish to avail yourselves usefully of this solemn occasion,—if you wish to be really confirmed in Christian principles,—let your most earnest prayer to God be, that you may follow Christ with a single mind and a single heart; not with affections divided between him and his enemies, with a wish to please him when it will not interfere with pleasing the world. Attach yourselves to your Saviour who has died for you, and let him be indeed your bread of life for ever. I use the forcible language of Scripture for the purpose of impressing upon your minds, that the simplest and surest way to learn all holiness and all goodness, is to learn a personal love and trust for that gracious Saviour in whom God has made himself comprehensible to man, whom we may look to at this moment as standing in his own human form at the right hand of the Majesty on high, our Redeemer, our Lord, and our God. This is Christianity, this is life eternal,—to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. And this, although the very language of it may seem strange to your ears, is nothing extravagant, nothing foolish, nothing to make you affected in manner or behaviour,

to make you ignorant, or to make you gloomy. True it is, it does require that you should be in earnest ; that you should feel, that this world, beautiful as it is, and the rich happiness that even yet is to be found in it, is not our eternal portion : that as all these things must pass away, and we must dwell for ever with God or with the devils, it is our wisdom to learn to know God and to love him here, even in our youth, or else heaven, even if we were to be admitted there, could afford us no enjoyment. True it is, that our evil and careless nature will require many efforts to change it ; and the best of those efforts must be our prayers. True it is, that you must pray when your prayers are not a mere form ; that you must read the Scriptures, when you are not called to read them as your lesson. You have much to do ; but that ought not to discourage you in the full activity of youthful spirits, when to do is to enjoy. You have much to overcome ; and if you leave the chapel to-morrow, with hearts ever so much warmed and resolutions ever so earnest, yet you will be sure ere long to slacken in your efforts. Zeal will cool, and resolutions will be broken. But be not afraid :—Christ's blood cleanseth us from all sin ; Christ's Spirit can give us at the last the victory. Be most afraid of carelessness, of forgetting God altogether, of letting days, and weeks, and months pass by, unmarked by any spiritual improvement, and, therefore, surely

marked by spiritual decay. If this be your case, I pray that God in his mercy may visit you with disappointments, with distress, with sickness, with any sorrow that may awaken you in time, and save you from the sorrow that worketh death. Better a thousand times that you should give all the world in exchange, than that you should lose your own souls. And now remember, that in this rite of confirmation, and in the words that you have now heard, you have received a talent for which you must answer at the judgment-seat of Christ. It may be either, with God's blessing, the seed of your eternal life, or a savour of death unto death, heightening your guilt, if you know, and were warned, and yet refuse to listen. It is my duty to place this responsibility upon you, as Christ has charged his ministers, and as he did himself. May God grant that we may each give our account with joy, and not with grief; and that when our Lord shall call us all out of our graves to meet his coming, we may stand at his right hand together, amongst the number of his redeemed.

SERMON XXIX.

ISAIAH xxxii. 13.

*Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers ;
yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city.*

THERE are two parts of the Christian preacher's office, and both of them of very great usefulness. The first is, that he should expound the Scriptures ;—the second, that he should address his hearers on those things which concern them particularly ; that is to say, on the particular faults which he may know them to be guilty of, on the particular temptations to which they are exposed, on those circumstances, whether in themselves or in their outward condition, which most affect their character, whether for good or for evil. No man would speak to his own children or household exactly in the same way that another man would speak to his ; and this is, because there is in every family something more or less peculiar to them, so that what would suit another, would not exactly suit them. And this is one great advantage of a

resident minister,—that by living amongst the people and knowing them, by seeing and hearing their state, and their opinions and actions when out of the church, he may be able, when he speaks to them in the church, to tell them the very things which they most need, to give the right medicine which may restore health, because he knows not only the complaint, but also the general constitution of the patient.

This, however, a stranger cannot do. A man of whom you know nothing, and who knows nothing of you, cannot pretend to enter into the particular state of your souls, nor to fix on the particular sort of exhortation which you may most need. He must take the other part of the Christian minister's office, and that too not the least useful; he must endeavour to expound the Scriptures. For here, however little we may know of one another, we are all on common ground. The Scriptures were given to our fathers, and to us, and to our children after us;—they are the learning which we all need, and which we can never understand too well. In one parish of England, as much as in another,—in one nation as much as in another,—nay, in one part of the world as much as in another,—the Scriptures are alike our common lesson. Yet, so rich are they in all the treasures of wisdom, that they contain what may satisfy the wants of one generation, and the different wants of another: they may be

most useful at one time of the world for one thing, at another time for another. I propose, then, now, to explain to you, as well as I can, the first lesson of this evening service, and to dwell particularly on those points of it which seem to me to be of most concern to us in our present generation.

The first lesson of this evening was the thirty-second chapter of Isaiah. I said just now, that there was so much in the Scriptures, that they could satisfy the different wants of different times ; and this is particularly true of the Prophets. There is a great deal in all parts of Isaiah which relates to our Lord Jesus Christ : there are, indeed, to be found in it some of the most famous prophecies in the whole Bible. Now, in the beginning of the Gospel, when the Christians were disputing with the Jews and heathens, to show that Jesus was the Christ, they would use the Prophets mostly for their prophecies : they would turn to Isaiah, and read those passages in which the Spirit of Christ that was in him testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow ; they would, then, point out how exactly Christ's life and death had fulfilled those prophecies, and would thus prove from the Scriptures, that this was he of whom the prophets had spoken, the Messiah, who had been promised for many generations. This was the use

which our fathers, in the beginning of the Gospel, made of the writings of the prophets; they turned to them as the best witnesses of Christ. And so they are rightly used by those good men in our own days, who make it their particular business to go to the heathen or to the Jew, and to turn them to the knowledge of Christ's salvation. But the prophets afford another use, which I think concerns us in these days,—us I mean who are living at home in our own country, amongst a people already named by the name of Christ,—which concerns us yet more nearly. The prophets spoke of things to come, it is true; but they spoke of things present also: they held up a light in a dark place, imperfectly understood in their own days, but bright and clear when the full day arose, of which they had obscurely spoken; but they also held up a light, a broad blazing light, to the men of their own times, which would never become clearer than it then was, and would be hardly ever again so clear. That is, they were teachers of righteousness to their own people: the sins which they reprov'd were the sins which they saw daily committed; the judgments which they threatened were the judgments which these sins would draw down; and, as this part of their task was more addressed to their own generation than to after ages, so it is most useful to those times and those nations which are most like the times when the

prophets lived, and the state of the nation of Israel, to whom their word was spoken.

Now I think, that our times and our own nation more closely resemble the time of Isaiah's preaching, and the nation of Israel to whom he preached, than any other time or nation that could be named. The worship of God was established by law amongst the Israelites as it is amongst us: they and we are alike in this, that both professed, as a nation, to believe in and to worship the true God. They honoured God with their lips as a people, though their heart was far from him: and so, at this very day, through all the ten thousand parishes of this land, how many voices will have joined in our Christian services of prayer and praise, whose hearts to-morrow will go their several ways to their pride, their pleasure, their covetousness, and their selfishness, without any thought or love for Him whom their tongues so lately honoured! Israel, in the days of Isaiah, was full of great riches and great poverty,—great covetousness and luxury on one side, great misery and carelessness of God on the other. Who can look through this land at this moment, and not see the same state of things here? Israel, in the days of Isaiah, had those who measured things and actions not by the word of God, but by the custom of men;—if practices were common and of long continuance, they were called by some

honourable name, whether they were an abomination in the sight of God or no. So it is among us, when we are for ever asking, not whether things and actions are such as become the Gospel of Christ, but whether they are worse than the state of other nations, or than the state of our own fathers. Again, Israel, in the days of Isaiah, had too many of those who scorned at God's word and his promises ; who went on in evil after their own devices, following their own bad passions of violence and disobedience, and impatience of the laws of God and man, and who said that God would not see, neither would the God of Jacob regard it. And of this too, they who know what is the present state of England, know that there is too much amongst us.

The prophets, then, are in a most remarkable manner the mirror, or glass, in which we may see our own likeness. It is only the names and out-sides of things that are ancient and different ; the reality is exactly the same. Now the thirty-second chapter, which was read as the lesson for this evening, is just such as we might all say of ourselves, looking forward to the time of Christ's second coming : " Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place ; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Is not this the Christian's

language?—we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; — where there shall be a perfect rest for the people of God. Again, Isaiah goes on, “ And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the hasty shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.” All this ought to have been the case, and was the case amongst Christ’s true followers, at his first coming; it is so now, wherever his Gospel is received, not in word only, but in deed, and in power; it will be so entirely, when Christ comes once more to complete the number of his redeemed. Then, indeed, every eye shall see him, and shall own him, and every ear shall hearken to the voice of his awful judgment; then the heart of the hasty, or thoughtless, shall understand what it is that it has despised; while the tongue of the humble believer, which want of education, or of natural ability, may have here on earth made to speak feebly and hesitatingly, shall then be ready to speak, as with an angel’s voice, the praise of its Redeemer. But Isaiah says again: “ The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the

drink of the thirsty to fail. The instruments also of the churl are evil : he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. But the liberal deviseth liberal things ; and by liberal things shall he stand.” Now this only requires a little attention to render it, I think, perfectly plain. The general sense is this,—now in this present state of things, covetousness and oppression work very often without breaking any human law, and without being blamed by men as they deserve. We are told that the Pharisees, who were covetous, derided what our Lord said about the danger of riches ; upon which he answered, “ Ye are they that justify yourselves before men ; but God knoweth the heart. For that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God ;” that is, the vile person and the churl,—in other words, the selfish and the close-handed,—may be praised now, and obtain, for any slight acts of liberality which they may perform, the credit of being liberal and bountiful ; and this, even although their heart be really set on covetousness, and though their general conduct be that of maintainers and supporters of things unjust and oppressive. But in that day when all hearts are open, and when God’s judgment shall judge all things as they are in very truth,—they shall lose the false names which men gave them, and shall be called, as they really were, selfish and hardhearted ;

while the truly liberal and charitable only,—they, whose charity is formed after the pattern of Christ, and the picture drawn by Christ's Apostles,—“ shall stand fast for ever and ever, and shall not be ashamed.” The prophet then proceeds to speak of the judgments that are going to befall Israel, mixing with his threatenings the promise of blessings upon repentance. He speaks of the desolation of Israel;—that on “ the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers, yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city.” But he speaks also of a restoration, of a period of repentance, and pardon, and peace, and blessedness. And this we know, that Israel after the flesh,—that is, the nation or people of the Jews,—has never yet seen, except so far as that they were restored to their own land after having been carried captives to Babylon. But even when thus restored, they were neither free, nor righteous, nor happy ; and a far heavier judgment fell upon them in the second destruction of their city and temple by the Romans ; since which it has never been restored at all. I believe, then, that from the time of our Lord's rejection by the Jews as a people,—they as a people were rejected by God ; and that since that time the Israel of prophecy is what St. Paul calls the Israel of God, —that is, the Christian church, composed out of Jews and Gentiles together, and the heirs of the faith and promises of Abraham, although not

all were his heirs in natural descent. To us, then, God's Christian Israel, a promise is made of a state of overwhelming blessing after a time of fearful judgments—judgments for the punishment of the tares, and for the cleansing and perfecting of the good seed; till, at last, when all that do evil, or that tempt to evil, shall be gathered out of the kingdom of God, the righteous may “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

My brethren, the times and the seasons of God's judgments and blessings are things which, I think, we vainly desire to know before the time of their arrival. When these judgments will come, and when the kingdom of God shall be fully manifested, not even the Apostles were permitted to learn in their day; and I cannot think that any fuller revelation is made to us. But they will come, wherever there is the sin to be weeded out,—the imperfect good to be purified,—the patient faith to be rewarded. This was our Lord's answer, when his disciples asked him where the things of which he spoke should happen. His reply was, “Wheresoever the carcase is, thither will the eagles be gathered together;” that is, wherever there is sin, there also will be judgment. It may be, that the blessings of which the prophet speaks would have come long ago, had mankind been fit for them. By the last words of the

chapter, “Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass;”—that is, blessed are ye who go forth into every land to sow the seed of the Gospel,—he seems to have imagined, that so soon as the Gospel was revealed,—so soon as it was preached among all nations, and received by them, then judgment and righteousness should prevail, and peace and everlasting blessedness follow in their train. We know by experience, that the Gospel may be received, and nations may call themselves Christians, and yet judgment and righteousness may not flourish; and, therefore, they must look for a curse from God and not a blessing. Yet ourselves, each of us, if we fulfil what is prophesied *of* us, so we shall surely reap the blessing which is promised *to* us. As wherever there is sin, so also will there be judgment,—so wherever there is faith and love, there will be peace and blessing;—peace, that none can take away, even “when it shall hail, coming down on the forest, and the city shall be low in a low place,” even amidst the most fearful scenes of tribulation and misery;—blessing, infinite and eternal, when death shall have removed us from sin and temptation, and shall bring us for ever into the presence of God.

SERMON XXX.

GALATIANS iv. 7.

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son ; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

I SAID, last Sunday, that the natural part of a Christian minister's office, when he is speaking to a congregation who are strangers to him, is rather to expound the Scriptures than to attempt to enter upon any direct and personal exhortation. Accordingly, I have now taken for my text a verse from that chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, out of which the epistle for the day is taken : a chapter, difficult in itself, and, as such, well deserving to be explained ; and, also, bearing upon that great event which our church service especially celebrates at the season of Christmas.

The chapter, like the whole of the epistle, is taken up with enforcing this truth :—that, in our hopes of salvation, we must trust to Christ alone,

and must not mix up any thing else whatever with the promises of the Gospel. It does not follow that our error should be exactly the same with that of the Galatians ; indeed, it certainly will not, for their error was to join the ceremonies of the law of Moses, such as circumcision, with the faith of the Gospel. They thought that they could not be saved by being Christians only, unless they were circumcised also, and kept the ceremonies of the law of Moses. Now this error is certainly not ours : we have no thought of practising the ceremonies of the Jews' law ; but yet we have very often notions of our own, which are just as mischievous. We will not trust entirely to Christ, nor to the promises of the Gospel, but lay at least a part of our hope on some devices of our own,—either on some foolish superstition, or on some false and extravagant opinion of our own goodness, which we think will bear us out in God's judgment.

Still, however, whatever our trust be, it differs from that of the Gospel in this one point,—that it will never give us the feeling of sons or children of God, but will, on the other hand, give us feelings of bondage, such as those that belonged to the law. These two expressions,—servant and son,—although you may not at first understand their whole meaning, do show most exactly what Christians have, and what other men want : real Christians, I mean ; for Christians in name only, and

not in deed, want it quite as much as other men. St. Paul says, that although we were to be made sons by and by, yet, till we came of full age, we were kept under the law in the state of servants or slaves ; for whenever you meet with the word servant in the New Testament, it means what we call a slave, that is, one who does not serve willingly for wages, but is the very property of his master, and is obliged to work without wages, whether he will or no : thus St. Paul says, “ When we were children, we were kept in bondage, that is, kept as slaves, under the rudiments of the world ;” but that when the full time was come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, in order to redeem us from this state of slaves, and give us the adoption of sons, that is, to adopt us as his children, whereas, we had before been no better than slaves. “ And because ye are sons,” St. Paul goes on to say, “ God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant,” (or, “ slave,”) “ but a son ; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” You see here, that they are said to have been slaves before they were Christians, in bondage under the rudiments of the world ; but that in becoming Christians they obtained their liberty, they were redeemed from bondage by Christ, and adopted as the sons of God, and were taught to feel towards God the love of

children in return: and, finally, as being the children of God, they were become his heirs; the heirs, through Christ, of that eternal kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world.

It is much to be lamented that so many persons, in reading these verses and others of a like sort, have no distinct understanding of their meaning, and cannot bring them home to their own condition, for their own improvement; nay, it often happens, that persons will use these and other words of St. Paul very freely: they will bring together, in their speeches or discourses, a great number of St. Paul's expressions, and thus will fancy that their language and spirit is entirely scriptural, and will even find fault with others who do not make use of the words of the Apostle so freely, although they are quite as anxious to catch his spirit. But you know that words which we do not understand, be they whose they will,—prophets', evangelists', or apostles',—are to us no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; we only deceive ourselves and others by using them. We must try to understand what is the meaning of these words:—"slaves," "rudiments of the world," "children of God by adoption, crying, Abba, Father;" and if we do get clearly to understand them, we may then, by God's grace, be able to draw from them some benefit to ourselves.

First, then, when St. Paul says that the Jews, before Christ came, were in bondage under the rudiments of the world, there are two things to be explained: what he means by “bondage,” and what by the “rudiments of the world.” A slave—one who is bought by his master, like a beast, and with whom his master may do whatever he chooses—is not very likely to serve for love; so far from it, he thinks his master a sort of natural enemy, whose interest is exactly opposite to his own. His service he thinks a burden, which it would be his happiness to get rid of: his commands he obeys, not because he respects or loves them, but because he will be punished if he disobeys; where he thinks that he can disobey without risk to himself, he does it immediately; and he puts as little strength and heartiness into his labour as he dares, because his work is task-work, and not the service of the heart. And this is the state of men in general towards God if they know the truth of his nature, and have been taught what are his commandments; in other words, it was the state of men under the law. Without the law, without a true knowledge of God’s will, they make his service suit their own inclinations; and therefore, of course, they do not think it a slavery. The heathens, who thought that their gods were to be served by sacrifices, and splendid shows, and festivals full of enjoyment, could not, certainly, feel as

slaves in their worship, for it was a worship of their own invention, and which suited their own desires. But they who knew God better, and who had learnt what he really required,—to do justice, and to love mercy, to walk humbly before him, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly,—they found all these things hard to them: they were set upon evil, and here was a law before them, commanding them to all good; and therefore they did not like the law, and they felt towards God as towards a severe master, whom they obeyed, so far as they did obey him, not from love, but from fear.

This then is what St. Paul means by a state of bondage: and when he says that it was a bondage under the rudiments of the world, he means that it was like the restraints which children are put under, when they are learning the first rudiments or beginnings of their schooling. Every one knows that it will not do to leave children to themselves, if we wish them to learn anything;—we must put them under rules, and keep them in obedience by the authority of their teachers;—they must learn, whether they like it or no. And, in general, they do not like it, because the beginnings or rudiments of all learning are not very agreeable, and because children, from their young age and lively spirits, are apt to be fonder of any thing else than of attending to their learning.

Thus restraint must be used; and their state therefore is one of bondage, because they do not like what it is their duty and business to do. So then, the condition of men in the old times, who had a knowledge of God and of his will, is well compared to that of slaves under a master, or that of children learning their first rudiments at a school: both obey from fear rather than from love, because they do not like the service which they are set upon.

But you will observe that St. Paul goes on to say, that the state of Christians was the very opposite to this. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So thou art no more a servant, (or slave,) but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." If you have followed the explanation of the former verses, you will see that when St. Paul says, "We are no more slaves but sons," he means that Christians serve God not from fear but from love; and that, so far from disliking their service, and grudging all the obedience which they render, it is their pleasure to serve God; and they never think it a service at all, but a privilege and a delight. They share in the Spirit of Christ, the only-begotten Son

of the Father,—as Christ loved the Father with an entire love, and found it his meat and drink to do his Father's will ; as he resigned all his own will to his Father's, and sought not his own glory, but the glory of him who sent him ;—and as, agreeably with these feelings, he never addressed God but by the title of Father, except in those memorable words on the cross, when for our sakes he endured that God should hide his countenance from him, and called upon him not as his Father, but as his God who had forsaken him ; as these, I say, were Christ's feelings towards God, so the Spirit of Christ gives to Christians to feel the same,—and they too, like Christ, addressed God by the name of Abba, that is, Father ; and they, too, feel towards him like sons, loving him, honouring him, and feeling it their pleasure to do his will rather than their own. And all this mighty change has been wrought : men were changed from slaves to sons,—from serving God with fear and dislike, to serving him with love and pleasure,—because “ God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons.”

Does not, then, this Christmas season, deserve to be celebrated as a joyous festival ? May not our hearts well rejoice and be glad that God's own Son was, as at this time, made of a woman, and sent into the world, to give us the name and

privileges of being God's sons also? Yes, the season does deserve to be celebrated as a festival;—our hearts may well rejoice and be glad. But, are they so? and, if not, why are they not so? I am afraid, that if we have thought of this passage of Scripture, which I have been attempting now to explain, our consciences will give us the answer too plainly. It is, in short, because we do not yet feel that we are God's sons;—we do not heartily call him, Father;—we are still living with the spirit of slaves under a master, or that of children in the rudiments of learning under a teacher; we obey from fear, and not from love. Alas! how little we seem to know or to feel the privileges which Christ has earned for us! How little do we go to God in the spirit of sons, whose sins are already forgiven, whose evil natures are already kindled by a better Spirit, who are born again, and not born only into a new life, but who have lived and grown on in it! Therefore, these Christian festivals are valued, not for themselves, not for the spiritual blessings which they record, but for the earthly pleasures which accompany them;—therefore that holy communion, to which Christ this day invites us, is regarded by some with fear, by others with dislike, by some with reverence,—but by none, perhaps, with that full delight and thankfulness which befits Christ's redeemed. And what is the way to gain that delight?—or, how shall we really gain the spirit of

sons, and cry in sincerity to God, Abba, Father? Why is it, that although Christ has died, yea, rather has risen again, we still feel as though he had not died, and were not risen ;—as though we were still unforgiven and unredeemed? One answer will serve, I am afraid, for all : we are yet in our sins—our faith is less than a grain of mustard seed. We cannot think that God has forgiven our sins, because we feel that our own hearts have not renounced them :—we cannot feel as God's redeemed children, because our hearts still cling to that which our Father cannot love. This is unbelief, in the Scripture sense of the term ; it is truly an evil heart of unbelief, and not an ignorant understanding : we do not believe in Christ our Redeemer, because we will not be redeemed from our sins. It is still as when he wept over Jerusalem : he would have gathered her children together, but they would not ; he would be our Saviour—would lead us to God as sons—would make us heirs of eternal bliss,—but we will not. Alas ! for that evil and rebellious will, which still loves darkness and slavery, rather than light and freedom ! But, my brethren, if your hearts answer to the truth of what I have been saying,—if neither to you nor to me this season of Christmas is so welcome, that holy communion so joyous, as it ought to be,—if you know, as I do, that our service to God is not paid with a true childlike spirit, that we are still in bondage under

the rudiments of the world,—do we not know what is the weapon with which we may gain our deliverance? In that beautiful story which we have all known and loved from our childhood, the Pilgrim, Christian, when well nigh overpowered by the enemies of his soul in the valley of the shadow of death, bethinks him of the weapon, *all-prayer*, and by the aid of that weapon is victorious. It is a true parable;—*all-prayer* is our best weapon, and one which is sure to conquer, if it be heartily and perseveringly used. If we pray and do not faint in our prayers,—if we earnestly beg of God for Christ's sake to give us a better mind,—to turn us from our sins with all our heart, to believe indeed that Christ has redeemed us,—we shall find, (for God's promise is our warrant,) that we shall gain the spirit that we desire;—that we shall no more be slaves but sons; and if sons, then heirs of God through Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXXI.

(PREACHED JANUARY, 1831.)

GENESIS i. 31.

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.

THE happiest man alive,—he who in his own person and particular fortune has met with the fewest troubles,—cannot seriously think upon these words without finding in them, indeed, matter for a sermon. No man, however much of happiness he may himself have tasted, can have lived so out of the world, and with his eyes and ears so closed to every thing passing around him, as to fancy, for an instant, that if God were now to look upon every thing that he had made, he could say that it was very good. Much more, then, would men in general, who had tasted a mixed draught of good and evil in life; and, above all, that numerous class of persons with whom the evil has far outweighed the good,—much more would

these be struck with the words of the text, and think how little the state of the world, as it had presented itself to their observation, agreed with that prevailing character of goodness which God found in all his works, when he first rested to behold the things which he had made.

“God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” He saw the natural world, and the moral world, and found that both alike were good. On the one hand, there were the sun, the moon, and the stars; the earth, and the sea; all plants and trees which grow upon the earth; all living creatures, whether insects, fishes, birds, or beasts, by which it is inhabited: and on the other hand, there was man, newly created after God’s image. All the other works of creation, without disorder, and without failure, obeyed the laws of their Maker; and man, also, after his measure, rendered a more worthy obedience, because it was the obedience of a reasonable soul and of a willing spirit.

Let us go on for about sixteen hundred years from the time when all had been declared thus good and happy. We shall then find the sun no longer giving his light, the earth and the sea no longer keeping their appointed bounds, the plants and trees no more yielding their fruits and flowers, the living creatures no more in their appointed order, glorifying God by the wonderful

varieties in their manner of living and ways of enjoyment; and for man, we shall no longer find him “very good,” at peace with God and with his brethren, holy and happy. But we shall find the world in ruin, the sun hidden by perpetual clouds, the sea burst from its limits, and covering the whole face of the land, plants and trees destroyed, living creatures overwhelmed in the waters, or leading an unnatural life in the close prison of the ark; and men, themselves, accursed of God, full of ungodliness, and violence, and selfishness, and, therefore, cut off, all except eight persons, and destroyed, together with that world which their sins had polluted. And, instead of blessing the works of his hands, and seeing that all was very good, “God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.”

Since that time, thousands of years have passed away; and what is the state of things now? In the other parts of God’s creation there is a mixture of good and evil; and although the heavens declare the glory of God, and the earth is full of his riches, yet still, in the uncertain seasons and scanty harvests which sometimes visit us, we may trace the marks of God’s judgment, and must confess that all is not “very good,”—is not entirely free from evil now. But if we look to man; although God has doubtless reserved to

himself a remnant, not of seven thousand only, but of seventy times seven thousand, who have not bowed the knee to Baal, nor taken the mark of the beast into their foreheads,—yet, in general, it is not only imperfect good that we see, but prevailing evil: the earth is filled with ungodliness, and selfishness, and violence. All the sins of the old world are amongst us; and how long will it be ere the punishment of the whole world overtakes us also?

Such *is* the state of things now around us; and the words of the text have told us what, on the other hand, it once *was*. And if we read on a very little way in the book of Genesis, beyond the part from which the text is taken, we shall see what first changed the world from good to evil; and shall thus be able to understand what it is that makes it so evil now. Hence, too, we may learn how to divide rightly the different kinds of evil from which we are suffering, and how we may endeavour, with God's blessing, to find for each its proper remedy.

We know that the sentence passed upon mankind after the first sin, was made up of two parts:—the necessity of labour; and that loss of God's favour, and everlasting banishment from his presence, which is all contained in the Scripture meaning of the word "death." In this life, then, man was to endure perpetual labour, and he was to

have no hope beyond the grave: he was to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow so long as he continued upon earth; and when the time of his going hence was come, he was to go down into darkness, and to be shut out for ever from Him who is the only fountain of life and joy.

The necessity of labour has been provided for ever since, by certain unerring laws of God's providence, which he has made to be the ministers of his righteous judgment. It is provided for mainly by the curse pronounced upon the earth: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee;" that is, if left to itself, and if men will not bestow their labour upon it, it will not yield those fruits which are needful for their well-being. Accordingly, amongst those savage tribes who do not labour upon the ground, life is to all a state of hardship and of labour besides: for great pains are employed in finding and catching those animals which supply them with their food; and all being obliged so to labour, there are no means of acquiring knowledge, no opportunity of discovering any of the useful arts, no ability to form or to enforce laws for the general good. When diseases break out amongst them, they have no skill to stop them, or to lessen their violence; when quarrels and wars arise, their brute passions, having no check of law or humane custom, lead them to indulge in the worst excesses of cruelty and revenge.

With savages, then, life is to all a continued labour; and one generation never advances beyond the state of its fathers. But when men do labour upon the ground, and thus make the earth yield her increase;—when riches are thus acquired, useful arts discovered, knowledge abundantly obtained;—when the condition of mankind, speaking now of their worldly welfare, is greatly improved, and each generation, availing itself of the experience and discoveries of its fathers, continues to advance beyond those which went before it;—when all this happens, still God has provided that men shall not be able to free themselves from the necessity of labour. He has so ordered the course of the world, that the numbers of mankind increase faster than the food which their labour, aided by their improving knowledge, can provide for them. And the very improvements of their knowledge help on this increase. Greater cleanliness and comfort, greater care and greater skill in medicine, are the means of saving a vast number of lives, and of prolonging them to old age, which amongst savages are cut off by sickness, neglect, and misery. And again, as laws and manners become better and milder, acts of violence are less common, and even wars are rendered far less bloody; insomuch that, whereas, in the old times, whole nations were sometimes cut off by the sword;

it is remarkable that in our days, war has added to the numbers of a people in some cases, much more than it has taken away : and in no instance has it had any effect worth noticing, in hindering the natural growth of population.

Thus the sentence of God still finds a way to fulfil itself out of the very midst of our prosperity. The numbers of a people continually multiplying call continually for fresh exertions of labour and knowledge to provide for them ; and thus all the sources of wealth which a country possesses are, one after another, found out and called into action. But when this has been done, and the numbers still go on increasing,—and especially when any particular causes have made them increase even faster than is natural,—then the land is not able to bear them, and God calls upon them by the voice of his providence, to go and bestow their labour upon other lands, that so the whole earth may be, in process of time, replenished and subdued. And because this labour is generally more unwelcome than any other,—for men naturally love the land in which they were born and bred, and would not willingly go and live far away from it,—therefore God calls us to it by the sharpest spur of necessity ; men's condition in their own country being rendered so miserable by their increasing numbers, in spite of all their labour,

that they have no choice left them, and are thus forced in a manner to execute God's purposes,—which are, that man shall earn his bread by labour, and that not one part of the world only, but the whole face of the earth, shall be by this labour replenished and subdued.

I am sure that these are points most fit and most useful to be, at this moment, explained to the people of this country. Undoubtedly the present distress has been partly occasioned by other causes, which cannot with propriety be touched upon here. As it ill becomes this sacred place to deny or to disguise those political evils which have been brought on by the fault of man, so neither does it become it to dwell upon them: because our business here is not to think of men's dealings with us,¹ but rather to consider our duties to them and to God,—and God's dealings also with us. But, in the present case, we need not go to other causes. If one single word could remove all the political grievances that exist, the distress would, in a great measure, still remain the same, because it arises from the very order of God's providence, which has made the natural increase of a people's numbers become, after a certain time, a sure cause of suffering,—that so men might be driven

¹ This was preached in a village church, where the congregation consisted chiefly of the poorer classes.

to foreign lands, and the whole earth might in time be inhabited and cultivated. Had it not been for this, the very land in which we now live might have been at this day a wilderness, and the human race might never have stirred beyond those countries in which the first patriarchs fixed their abode. But God wills that man's labour should never cease till the whole earth be filled; yet, while enforcing this by distress and suffering, he at the same time gives a blessing to it: for though distress may force a man to go to a distant country, yet he may go out in hope,—his labour, when bestowed in God's appointed manner, will be sure of meeting with its return,—and suffering is, in fact, only the needful spur to make an effort, unwelcome in itself, but which will surely lead to an improvement in his condition who makes it.

So, then, labour, which was one part of God's first sentence upon sin, will always be man's necessary portion; yet out of it, when rightly employed, he gains his greatest worldly good. And so death, which was the other part of the sentence, will always be our portion also; yet out of it, when rightly taken, we gain our greatest good of all; for, unless we put off this mortal frame, we cannot be clothed with immortality. Out of the earthly punishment comes our earthly good;—out of the punishment which went be-

yond this earth comes our heavenly and everlasting good. But then the punishment must be rightly taken; that is, it is only a Christian death which has in it the seed of life eternal: otherwise, it is death, and death for ever. And now that evil in the world, and in ourselves, of which I spoke in the beginning of my sermon,—that evil which makes God's works in their present state so unworthy of their original blessing,—is an evil of two kinds, a natural evil and a moral evil; or, in plainer words, distress and suffering in our outward condition, and the evil of wickedness and sin. I have said what I most fully believe,—I will almost say what I know,—to be the chief cause of the outward suffering, namely, that our numbers are so many, that like the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot before they parted from one another, the land is not able to bear us,—so that we cannot dwell together. And the remedy,—I do not say the only one, but the chief one, and without which no other will be of any use,—is even the same which has been practised from the earliest times for the furtherance of God's purposes; that they who are in distress in their own country should remove to plenty and to comfort in a new country. But for the other evil, that of sin and wickedness, which adds so greatly to our outward distress, neither may this be cured by any political improvements

alone,—and, unless it be cured, political improvements are, after all, of little value. If we had not a single grievance to complain of, do we think that all our temptations would be gone also; or, that if some were made less, others again would not rather become greater? He must know very little of himself who does not know that his own heart, after all, is his worst enemy;—that if all were peace and comfort without, he has still in his own evil nature, until it is changed by the Spirit of God, a worse root of bitterness within. But what says the last of God's prophets, when proclaiming the preparation for Christ's coming? “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” How every word of this is, indeed, a lesson to us now! To remember the eternal law,—not that of forms and ceremonies, but that of the Spirit of holiness; the love of God, and of our neighbour,—that he who, like Elijah, would do the work of a true reformer, should labour to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers,—that is, should labour

not only to keep alive the affections of domestic life, for that is not all that is intended, but to turn to one another the hearts of those who are as fathers and children in the state—of those who are in authority, and those subject to authority—of those who, from wealth, rank, knowledge, or character, are fitted to instruct, relieve, and improve, and those who, from poverty and ignorance, have great need that relief and instruction should be given them. Are the hearts of these two classes turned to one another at present?—and if they are not ere long, is it not sure, to the extreme of certainty, that God will soon come and smite the earth with a curse—with that bitter curse which unkindly feelings, in their last excess, involve both in private life and in public? What is it, when they who should be fathers, show nothing of a father's care; when they who should be children, show nothing of childlike duty? God knows, and God be thanked for it, that there are many blessed exceptions,—that in many cases the hearts of the rich and poor are knit to one another in Christian brotherhood. But I know, and you know also, that in too many cases it is far otherwise; that neglect and selfish carelessness on the one side, have led to suspicion and bitter hatred on the other; so that I have heard it said, that the rich and the poor are each other's natural enemies: and thus

the poor look with suspicion even upon those who, in all sincerity, are trying to do them kindness, because they look upon them as belonging to the party of their enemies. This suspicion is shocking indeed, and most unjust; but it is not by showing disgust or anger that we can remove it.

Brethren, the truth ought to be spoken at this crisis without any scruple or reserve; only let it not be thought that while speaking, in this matter especially, of the faults of others, the Christian minister does not feel how much he himself is included in the same reproach. We have been, and are now, far too neglectful of the poor and ignorant; we measure their wants by far too low a standard; we are content with doing far too little for them: the vile person is sometimes called liberal, and the churl said to be bountiful, because we take to ourselves too much credit for trifling services, which cost us little or nothing of self-denial. In one word, we do not enough study to catch the full spirit of His example, who, though he was their Lord and Master, yet washed his own disciples' feet, that we also might learn to wash one another's feet. These are our faults;—neglect and selfish carelessness: for of hardheartedness, or wilful oppression, I verily believe that the instances are most rare. These are our faults: and would that every one of us,

by private and public prayer, and with all watchfulness, would strive to gain the full spirit of charity, to do away with them. But the poor have their faults too : and, although *we* may not well reprove them, while we labour under our own, yet, in the sight of God, who will judge us all without respect of persons, they are faults to be repented of and amended. They have not the charity which thinketh no evil, for they suspect evil, sometimes, where nothing but kindness is intended ; they encourage others to think meanly of them, when they are so careless of truth, so long as anything is to be gained by a lie ; they are great respecters of persons, and show a very low sense of justice and goodness, when they excuse acts of dishonesty, or even of violence, so long as they are committed by the poor against the rich. If the poor wish to be respected, let them hate falsehood and dishonesty, by whomsoever committed, and for whatever object. But these things are not subjects on which we may reproach one another : rather, let us bear our own burdens, without looking to those of our neighbours, and each ask forgiveness of God for our sins, and grace heartily to repent of them. Doubtless the times are awful ; and evil of every sort, outward and moral,—distress of nations, tumults, war, and, in our own bosoms, unbelief and uncharitableness,—are threatening

our happiness, here and hereafter. What the result may be, as far as regards the nation, or this world's prosperity, is kept among the hidden things of God. But it is among the things revealed for our comfort, that no labour of faith and love is ever lost for him who works it;—that He in whom the Christian trusts is able to save to the uttermost those who come to him; and that, amidst all tribulations, he who shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.

SERMON XXXII.

MARK X. 29, 30.

Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

SUCH was the promise; and, for its fulfilment, we have only to turn to the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles: "The multitude of the believers had one heart and one soul; neither said any one among them that aught of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had all things in common. Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of what they sold, and laid them at the Apostles' feet; and distribution was made to every one according as he had need."

What our Lord promised to those who should leave all for his sake, was this: that even in this life they should be gainers by it: they would be happier than they were before. Nor did he mean this only of happiness of mind, of that inward peace which on another occasion he promised them. His words are to be understood of happiness in its plainer and more common sense; of happiness, as it is derived from things out of ourselves,—from our worldly condition, and the treatment which we meet with from those around us. They who parted with house and lands for Christ's sake, would have their loss more than made up to them, even in houses and lands; they who lost the love of their natural friends, would have the place thus left empty in their hearts filled with more and dearer friends than nature had given them. Yet two little words are added to this description, to show that it was to be no state of perfect enjoyment. The houses and lands which they were to share,—the friends whose love they were to gain,—were to be theirs, but accompanied “with persecutions:” they would have much to suffer from others, how happy soever they might be amongst themselves. Life, in short, was by no means to be stripped of its trials; but they who followed Christ in sincerity, were to have wherewithal to bear them, not only patiently but cheerfully.

Now, granting all that can be granted to account fairly for the difference between the first Christians and ourselves;—allowing that when the persecutions ceased, the armour against persecution was not needed,—that when men were no longer called upon to part with their property and their natural relations, they would not require to find houses, and lands, brothers, sisters, parents, and children, in the liberality and kindness of the Christian society at large;—granting, further still, that to men expecting in a few years to see the utter destruction of their country, as was the case with the early Christians at Jerusalem, the common business and pursuits of life must have lost much of their interest;—still, allowing all this,—which may very reasonably make a considerable difference between the first Christians assembled at Jerusalem, and ourselves now,—yet is it not true, that we do not find in the Gospel that bond of mutual kindness, that perfect principle of social union, which we might, and ought, to find in it? Whether, in short, these times of outward calm, which we have so long enjoyed, have not made us neglect what is alike the preserving salt of prosperity, and our only stay and shelter in evil days: whether, although, blessed be God, there are thousands of Christian individuals amongst us, there are many marks to be seen of our belonging to a Christian society?

This is one of the points, perhaps, on which a stranger may speak with greater advantage than one to whom the circumstances of a congregation are fully known. What I say, cannot by possibility be personal, or meant to touch this place more than any other. But as I never yet knew the place which was not deficient more or less in that which I am going to speak of,—and as I see the whole kingdom from one end to the other suffering grievously from this cause,—so I am sure that to no congregation can it be otherwise than seasonable to dwell upon it.

A time is spoken of in the Revelation of St. John, when the kingdoms of this world were to become the kingdoms of God, and of Christ. We look to this, as to the last period of prophecy,—as to a state of happiness more like heaven than earth. But what shall we say if this very state has been ours for a thousand years, and we have all that time been wasting and abusing it? What shall we say if this, and every other country of Europe, has long been presenting a picture, which St. John, could he have had it laid before him, would have held to be utterly visionary and monstrous: that they have been long in name the kingdoms of God and of Christ, but in spirit and in power hardly less than ever the kingdoms of the world?

Let us put ourselves for a moment in the time and place of the Apostles, and then we shall judge with what joy they must have hailed the prospect of seeing the Christian church placed in outward circumstances as it is now. Their peculiar worship, as Christians, was obliged to be held in secret; in some instances, literally in dens and caves of the earth. Wherever they turned, in public or in private life, they could not but see that they were a small and despised minority; that their whole conduct, their whole conversation, their whole lives, must be a struggling against the stream. Walking in the streets of their native towns, the early Christians found themselves reminded, at every turn, of their being separated from the mass of their countrymen. The temples were not for them to enter; the places of public amusement exhibited scenes which the servant of Christ could not bear; the days in the year, whose return was welcomed by all else as days of festival, were to them become days of abomination. Even the very business of life made them feel as aliens: heathen ceremonies surrounded the judgment-seat of the magistrate, and the camp of the soldier; and the government, in all its public acts, and in all its language, showed that it knew not God, nor cared for him. Imagine then, if we had lived in such a state, how joyful we should have been to

learn that the kingdoms of the world were to become the kingdoms of God and of Christ; that the places of public worship in our towns were to be Christian churches; that our festivals and holidays were to be days kept in remembrance of Christ and of his saints; that our places of amusement were to be free from the gross pollutions of heathenism; that in our courts of justice our oath should be given upon Christ's Gospel; that in every profession of life, up to the state of the king upon his throne, Christ's law should be acknowledged as supreme, and no other God should be owned but the Lord Jehovah!

Such is, and such has been our condition, for about a thousand years: but where is the fruit of it? Are we not all of us apt, in our several ways, to put asunder what God has joined?—to separate the kingdoms of the world from the kingdoms of Christ, instead of labouring all that we can to make them more entirely one? The man of careless life and loose principles, tries to do this in one way; the sincere and zealous Christian, but with a zeal, I think, not according to knowledge, is labouring no less to effect it in another. How the careless and profane try to do it, is sufficiently clear. They would unchristianize public and private life, as much as possible, to get rid of the restraints of Christ's

law. They try to banish the name of Christ from our conversation, and to substitute, which is a much more serious matter, other principles of action in the room of his. Honour, liberality, justice, high feeling,—things which indeed are good and lovely in themselves and in their proper place,—they dwell upon as on the only or the highest motives; so that a good man does not always mean one who walks in the fear of God, and in the faith of his Son Jesus Christ. Pretending to honour religion, as they call it, they say that they would keep it to its own proper sphere, forgetting, or choosing to forget, that its sphere is everywhere and every thing; and that, if we are Christians only in church, or on Sundays, and write as Christians only in our prayers or sermons, and talk as Christians only with the poor or over a sick-bed, we may just as well be heathens altogether. In the same way, these persons would remove from the business of life,—from the language of laws and magistrates,—from the acts of public and professional bodies,—all that declares our obedience to Christ. They would thus, in fact, dethrone him, and set up in his room worse than the idols of the old heathen times: for where Christ is not, there is the enemy of Christ, and of God. It matters not what name you give it, nor with how fair a robe you cover it; but be assured of this, that

so soon as we do not worship God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that very moment, and in exact proportion to our neglect of him, do we become the worshippers and the servants of evil and of death.

But now, how do many good men act under these circumstances? They are actually playing the enemy's game, and helping to do his work. Instead of remembering that this is a Christian country,—that every parish is by law a Christian society,—and that we are bound to one another at once by the ties of nature, of civil society, and of Christianity,—these persons are trying to make little separate societies again,—to cast off the mass of their countrymen and neighbours as servants of another master, and to go back wilfully to that state of the church from which it was promised to be delivered; a state in which the kingdoms of the world were opposed to the kingdoms of Christ. Whether in the Established Church or out of it, (for it is to be found in both places,) this is a most grievous evil, and one which I am sure serves most fatally the cause of the enemy. I know it is natural enough. I know that for our own mere pleasure we should never associate with any one who did not quite sympathise with ourselves: and if this were so, into what a mass of narrow-minded and uncharitable societies the world would be divided! I know,

as a matter of taste, serious persons may most covet the society of the serious; and excited and vehement persons the society of the vehement. So also, persons of particular religious opinions find it agreeable to associate with one another;—and, because they do associate with one another only, and thus know little of the good which exists out of their own circle or sect, they begin to think that goodness and their own opinions go together, and consider as a peculiar blessing upon themselves what arises merely from their own wilful narrowness of views and living to themselves only. But, God be thanked, He who provides far better for all our wants, temporal and spiritual, than we can provide for ourselves, He has given us opportunities of living to far better purpose than this. Nature and neighbourhood have determined with whom we shall live most, and towards whom we are called upon to perform Christ's lessons;—but, now that society is Christian, to the ties of nature and neighbourhood are added those of Christianity. My relation is not less my relation than he was, nor my neighbour less my neighbour; it was amongst the heavy trials of the early church that Christ's call did interfere with these natural bonds: but now he mercifully sanctifies them, and gives us the bond of Christianity only to bind them closer. And shall I undo his merciful work, and

call those as belonging to the world whom he calls belonging to the church? What, though at the end of the world, He to whom all hearts are open, will say, that many of them were not truly his; yet, who am I that I should judge before the time, or judge without his authority? What, if they lived not as he lived in this world; what, if the earnest of his Spirit be not visible in them!—then may not the labour be doubly blest which strives to prepare the way for it? Would to God that all the Lord's people were his in heart and in truth!—and he has given me the best encouragement to try to make them so, when he tells me that he rejoices more over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.

Yet one word more: whilst speaking against a sectarian spirit,—while earnestly enforcing that we do not separate again in our views that kingdom of the world and kingdom of Christ which God has made one,—that we mix with our relations and neighbours, in public life and in private, as with those whom Christ no less than nature has bound to us,—yet, God forbid that I should seem to recommend doing this in a careless or worldly spirit, that I should wish to compromise the purity of Christ's Gospel. No, not a hair's breadth;—we need not, nay, we dare not; not so much as one hair's breadth

may we deny our Master, or encourage evil. But, take we good heed that we do not give our Master's name to what is merely our own folly;—that we do not call evil, what Christ condemns not. War unto the end with evil;—but let us be sure that we rightly know what evil is, and that we recollect also with how much of good it is mingled often in the same person, and that the good must not be rudely quenched whilst we are striving to put out the evil. Remember we finally, that it is not Christ the Judge whom we can or ought to imitate, but Christ the Saviour, struggling indeed continually against evil, but long-suffering to the utmost, and casting out none till the day of grace was past for ever.

SERMON XXXIII.¹

LUKE xi. 52.

Woe unto you, Lawyers ! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge : ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

THESE two offences here mentioned, are generally found to go together. On the one hand, he who makes no use of the key of knowledge himself, who remains in ignorance of all the treasures to which it would open the door, naturally will take very little trouble to give his neighbour the power of using it; and, on the other hand, he who not only does not give it to his neighbour, but actually tries to hinder him from getting it, is commonly one whose guilt is happily lessened by his not knowing himself the value of the blessing from which he is excluding others. It

¹ Preached as a Charity Sermon, for the benefit of a school.

were a wickedness almost monstrous, for a man to have fully tasted of the sweets of knowledge himself, and yet to endeavour to deprive others of the same enjoyment. And, indeed, in that higher sense of the word knowledge in which Christ uses it, such conduct is absolutely impossible. He who knows God himself, cannot but be anxious that his brethren should know him also; it were a pain and grief not to be borne, to keep silence from the good words of everlasting life, when we have once heard and understood them ourselves.

To support institutions, then, such as that which I am this day to recommend to your notice, seems to me to be one of the first and plainest duties of a Christian. It is hard, indeed, to conceive how any Christian man can rest contented with doing nothing to lessen the fearful amount of ignorance which exists in the world. As he cannot do *all*, indeed, he may and must choose some one or more particular subject for the exercise of this duty; but he cannot, and must not, leave it altogether undone. And, in making his choice, I know not that any man is entitled to dictate to him; for as our bodily tastes are different, so, also, are the tastes and habits of our minds; and as it were a foolish tyranny to insist upon any one's liking one particular kind of wholesome food more than another,

so, also, it seems unreasonable to require all men to appreciate most keenly the excellence of that particular work of charity, into which we ourselves are inclined to enter most heartily. Still, although it is wisely ordered that different works of charity should especially attract different persons, yet it is greatly to be desired, as we shall see hereafter, that if we can spare our time and attention only to one principally, yet that we should give our money, so far as we can, and take an interest at least in several. Many, again, have at present no particular preference, but are ready to be won by any useful object to which circumstances may most forcibly draw their notice, or which, on an impartial consideration, may seem to be of the most extensive or most certain usefulness. Now nothing can be more clearly and certainly useful, than to provide at once for the instruction and for the maintenance of the poor in our own immediate neighbourhood; for their instruction on these points which are most essential to their everlasting welfare, and for their maintenance in such humble and simple callings as none can think too high for them.

But I confess that when I think of the times in which we are living, and of the peculiar circumstances of our actual state of society, I feel my business to be, not so much doubtfully and humbly to request your support for this and other such

institutions, as to regard it as a thing which you cannot refuse, and to press upon your minds how greatly the ordinary charity of ordinary times falls short of the needs of the present crisis. Indeed, the very meaning of what is called a charity *sermon*, that is, of appointing the church, and not any other place, to be the spot where the appeal to your liberality is to be made, seems to point out such a manner of addressing you. It were to profane this sacred place, and the ministry of those who speak in it, if the sole object of our meeting here were merely to collect a certain sum of money. Let the purpose for which it is collected be ever so excellent, still the Christian minister in this place must not leave the word of God and serve tables; he must not try merely to persuade his hearers to give money, but must endeavour that they may so give it, as that the gift may bring with it a blessing to themselves. We should grieve, much rather than rejoice, to see the largest possible sum contributed for the purposes of the institution which we advocate, if it were given in such a spirit, as rather to injure your souls than to benefit them. And it is given in this spirit, if it be given with self-satisfaction, as a discharge of the claims of God and our neighbour upon us,—as the purchase of undisturbed and unscrupulous selfishness on other occasions. It is mentioned by

the Prophet Isaiah, among the signs of that day when God should come to judge the earth, that “the vile person shall then be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful.” He means, I fear, that we, measuring ourselves by ourselves, and not by the standard of God’s infinite love, claim the praise of bounty and liberality for some little or some ostentatious acts of kindness, when there are great and numerous evils existing on all sides in our daily path, which, like the Priest and Levite in the parable, we pass by and regard not. There are evils to which custom has so hardened us, that we seem to take them almost as matter of course: no man thinks himself wanting in charity, if he goes on his way without stopping or turning to notice them. Such is the state of the poor around us at this hour, both with regard to their moral condition and their physical,—their poverty and their ignorance. If we feel this strongly, we shall not only be inclined to give liberally on occasions like the present, but we shall give with a sense of humiliation rather than of pride, when we think how much there is to be done, and how little we do, or have done towards it. And the same feeling will lower those excessive expectations of gratitude from the objects of our bounty, which can exist only to be disappointed, and when disappointed, shut up our hearts most unreasonably

against the calls of distress for the time to come. The higher we estimate the claims of Christ upon us, in behalf of our poorer brethren, the humbler will be our estimate of our kindnesses towards them, and we shall be contented with a far less ardent expression of gratitude. Gratitude, besides, is paid we know, not for the service of the hand, but for that of the heart : we are grateful for kindness and for sympathy, much more than for mere benefits conferred on us. And if, on looking into our own hearts, we find much contemptuous, or, at least, indifferent feeling towards the poor ;—if, while we relieve them in their worst distresses as objects of our bounty, we feel but little real sympathy and friendship towards them, as towards our brethren in Christ Jesus ;—we shall be more vexed with ourselves for deserving their gratitude so little, than with them for rendering it to us in too scanty measure.

For the evils which now beset the relations of the rich and poor with one another in this country, various remedies, are, as we know, agitating in men's minds ; and some of these are, in every respect, far worse than the actual state of things. But one remedy there is, full and complete in its operation, and with no shadow of danger or evil attending it,—the remedy of a general and earnest application of the principles of the Gospel to our dealings with each other,

not only as individuals, but as classes of society. The temper prevailing amongst us, is a much worse evil than the actual distress suffered by any description of persons, severe as we know it in some instances to be. It cannot be denied that our estimate of the wants of the poor, both physical and moral,—of the feelings and pleasures which they may and ought to be rendered capable of enjoying,—is commonly fixed much too low : we see that they are in many points very unlike ourselves, and we seem to think it natural and fitting that they should always remain so. Thus many persons have thought that the poor were educated enough, when they were taught to read and write ; and some have even maintained that this was itself too much for them. So then, it is the way to promote union and brotherly love amongst us, to keep one half of the community in total ignorance of some of the greatest enjoyments of the other half ; in other words, to render it impossible that they should fully sympathize with each other ! The arguments for so doing are fitted only for the intercourse between masters and slaves ; and it is chiefly because they are utterly inconsistent with the feelings of Christian brethren towards each other, that a system of slavery is justly felt to be incompatible permanently with the full growth of Christ's Gospel. So far from keeping the poor distinct from ourselves,

our object, both as Christians and as citizens, should be to bring them as much as possible to resemble us: to give them, to the very utmost possible extent, an interest in the same things which interest us; and so to teach them to look at things in the same light, or, in other words, to think and to feel as we do. Nothing can be more untrue than the notion that the mere difference of station and fortune, must of itself create this difference of opinions, and want of sympathy. For look at the enormous differences in these respects, which do exist amongst the educated classes themselves; but yet which exist along with a great deal of mutual sympathy, and a sense of really belonging to the same society. It is not that the poor must always envy the rich, or the inferior wish to pull down his superior to his own level. Bad as human nature is, it is yet, blessed be God, far from being as bad as this. There is a natural pleasure in finding objects for our respect; and we are willing enough to acknowledge a superiority which does not insist upon too great an exaltation. But when any class of men are treated as slaves, they acquire unavoidably all those envious and discontented, and revengeful passions, which are the constant curse of slavery; and where the difference in mind is so great as to render a cordial union impossible, there the differences in outward

comforts are most keenly felt, and the rich are looked upon with suspicion and dislike for their elevation above the rest of their countrymen.

I know that there exists a foolish notion, that to raise the poor in knowledge, and to increase their sense of their own importance, would derange the present order of society. But he must indeed be blind, who does not see that society is endangered actually by the ignorance of the poor, and by their feeling of the suffering and degradation of their present condition. And what is far more to the purpose is, that this danger is now, in a considerable degree, our own fault; and a fault which will become daily more and more blameable, in proportion as we persist in it in spite of warning. No doubt, the increased knowledge and comforts of slaves will put an end to slavery; because slavery is an abuse and an injustice which exists only through the weakness and degradation of those who suffer from it. And if the increased knowledge and improved feelings of the poor, could put an end to poverty, as indeed they would greatly lessen it, and still more would temper its worst bitterness, who would not bless God, if he might be even one of the humblest instruments of so great a good! But to fear that the poor would destroy all distinctions of property, in the same manner as slaves would free themselves from slavery, is to

put property and slavery on the same footing ; to confound a good with an evil ; a right with a wrong ; a system, whose destruction would of necessity make the well-being of mankind impossible, with one whose destruction would highly promote it ; it is, in short, to confound a thing which no good man will attack, with one which no good man will defend. And experience abundantly shows that property and slavery do rest upon a wholly different foundation ; for history furnishes no instance, even amidst the wildest revolutions, of an attack on property, as such. I mean, that no scheme has ever been attempted for taking away the property of the rich, merely because they had too much, and giving it to the poor, merely because they had too little. There have not been wanting, indeed, at different times, a few individuals, half desperate in wickedness, and half crazed in folly, who have tried to propose such a thing ; but the common sense of mankind, poor as well as rich, has instantly put down the notion, with mingled disgust at its injustice, and ridicule of its childish folly. Nor is it possible that it should ever find favour, unless through what might fitly be called the continued crime of society ; I mean, from our allowing the poor to go on in such a state of ignorance and misery, that the folly of the plan would not be seen by them ; and the inevitable

wretchedness that it would occasion, as well as its extreme wickedness, would be a matter of indifference to men who had ceased to regard either God or man, from a conviction that their actual misery could not possibly be changed for the worse.

And now, to bring all this into a form more directly practical,—if I am asked, what should any individual do upon this view of our social condition, or what good can he derive from considering it; it is not difficult, I think, to find an answer. First of all, with regard to the institution with which we are now more immediately concerned, and others of a similar kind; he who is deeply convinced that what is most wanted in our relations with the poor is not charity, in our common sense of the word, but charity in St. Paul's sense of it,—not beneficence and almsgiving, but brotherly kindness and sympathy,—he will not only be more anxious to support them to the utmost by his subscriptions, and by his personal attention, but he will do this in a humbler and simpler spirit; that is, he will think that he is doing no great thing after all, but a very common and obvious duty, which he dares not to leave undone. Further, he will be relieved from a feeling which, I believe, has chilled the zeal of many in supporting schools for the poor, and has perplexed and pained the

minds of more. The feeling which I speak of, is this:—misled by the common language, and accustomed to form a very low estimate of the intellectual wants of the poor, many persons confound reading and writing with education: they consider themselves as having been engaged in educating the poor; and then, when they see that their labours have produced little fruit, they are half bewildered when they hear it said that this is a plain proof that to educate the poor can do no good. Alas! in that sense of the word which could alone justify our expecting so much from it, I know of no provision hitherto made in England for the education of the poor, nor, perhaps, is it possible that any can be made. I never knew any poor man who could properly be said to be educated; except, in some rare instances, where men, breaking through all difficulties, have, by their own power of mind and indefatigable industry, succeeded in educating themselves. If we call our own children educated at the age when we commonly send them to school for the first time, if their education is completed at eight or nine years old,—then may we call those educated who have been taught to read and write at our parish schools. But if reading and writing are not education, but the mere preparatory steps to it,—then to talk of the education of the poor, is to talk of a thing

which does not exist; and to expect an important moral and religious improvement from the machinery now in operation, is to look for a full crop of corn after sowing a single handful of seed. Even that handful may produce something; and they who have compared the results of our present schools with the means employed in them, and with the unfavourable circumstances of other kinds which counteract their influence, will be gratified much rather than disappointed,—will rather thank God that the good effected has been so much, than wonder that, with such inadequate means, it is not more. All that has been done hitherto, then, should encourage, much more than discourage us; but he who has a high sense of what education really is, and how grievously the poor stand in need of it, will feel, that if the mere first steps to it have been found useful, the reality itself, which it is his bounden duty to try to introduce,—the further it is carried, which to the utmost practicable extent it should be,—may well be looked to as a source of still greater blessings.

Again, he who feels strongly what the poor now are, and to what they may, and ought to be raised, in the course of time, although he may sometimes grieve to think that one individual, or ten, or twenty, can do little upon the mass of society; yet if he be not impatient, but re-

members that God has separated the harvest-time from the seed-time, no less in the moral world than in the natural, he will go on his way in faith and joy, and will boldly, yet humbly, "cast his bread upon the waters." It were indeed painful, if, while our present wonderful social activity so favoured the spread of evil and of falsehood, it were not equally favourable to the circulation of truth. But views, such as I have been describing, respecting the state of the poor, and our duties to them, if avowed and acted upon by individuals, soon become known through their immediate circle; persons impressed with them get transplanted into other parts of the country, and spread them there;—they find their way through the press, in the course of time, to public notice;—and at length, though much more slowly, may find their way into general practice. This, however, is a prospect for the future; but, in the mean time, in this, as in every town, there are opportunities continually arising for establishing societies for some beneficial purpose or other: and they who feel that the whole condition of the poor requires to be improved, will be anxious to encourage, not some of these only, but all. Hitherto our efforts have been too much divided; because our views of the existing evil have been only partial and inadequate. One part of our popu-

lation has been active in establishing and supporting religious societies; they have been zealous for national and other schools,—for the spreading of religious tracts,—for the encouragement of foreign missions,—and the circulation of the Scriptures; others, again, have highly valued the effects of savings-banks and benefit societies; while others have turned their attention more particularly to the relief of the poor in sickness, whether by hospitals or dispensaries. But, in fact, all these engines should work together, or else the operation of each loses more than half its power. And particularly with regard to the religious improvement of the poor, it is certain that their social degradation is one of the greatest bars to it; and that he can scarcely speak to them with success on spiritual subjects, who does not seem keenly alive to their worldly evils, and to feel towards them in his actual dealings, an unaffected spirit of brotherhood.

Above all, he who feels towards the poor as towards his brethren in Christ Jesus, whom it is his business and his pleasure to raise in all respects, he will wear naturally, in his dealings with them, a manner of frank and straightforward kindness, free from that manifest condescension which is a certain symptom of real pride. This may seem a little thing to mention in this place, but its importance is not little,

and we have the authority of an apostle for dwelling on it. St. James fixes upon the proud and insulting manner of the rich towards the poor, as on a single offence against the spirit of the Gospel :—" If there come into your assembly a poor man in mean apparel, and ye say unto him, Stand thou there, or Sit here under my footstool, are ye not partial in yourselves, and become judges of evil thoughts?" The spirit of this passage goes manifestly to condemn any thing like superciliousness, or a domineering manner in our behaviour to the poor, just as if they were beings of a different nature from ourselves, or, at least, were no better than our slaves. And this is a fault which can only be cured by remembering the royal law, according to the Scripture, —"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" by feeling that the poor are not mere objects of our bounty, but our neighbours and our brethren. If we do feel this, kindness will cost us nothing, and a familiar and unpretending manner will be natural to us : for who thinks of being proud or insulting towards his brother? And it is astonishing how much pleasure any one of us may thus give, almost daily, at no cost or trouble to himself. To talk to the poor upon mere common points, without seeming always bent upon instructing them or relieving them ;—to visit them, and talk to them, in short, as neighbours ;—to

care for their pleasures and amusements, and especially, to study their feelings ;—to give them credit often for more delicacy and refinement than they really have, in order to teach them gradually to be what we suppose them to be ;—these are things which every one may practise, and by which a wonderful improvement may soon be effected both in the temper of the poor towards the rich, and in what requires amendment no less, the temper of the rich towards the poor.

If all this be an idle dream,—if it be thought wild and visionary, and destructive of the existing order of society,—I would most solemnly entreat those who think so, to look seriously around them, and then ask themselves whether society is in no danger from the continuance of the system, and the feelings, on which we are acting towards the poor at present. But if they are capable of listening to better arguments than those addressed to their fears, I would request them to read carefully the language of Christ and his Apostles with respect to the poor ; and still more, because the circumstances are more exactly parallel, the language used on the same subject by the prophets of the Old Testament. If they can read that language, and honestly satisfy themselves that the judgments threatened there are not applicable to us,—or if they can

flatter themselves that society now in England is any thing like the picture given in the New Testament, of what Christ's family should be,—then there is no more to be said; and Christ's judgment alone, when we all appear before him at the last great day, can decide whether they have fatally blinded their consciences or no. But for those who do think that the woes threatened by the prophets are deserved in fearful exactness by us now;—who look in vain for such a state of the Christian church as Christ and his Apostles speak of;—they may be more than pardoned, if they, at every possible opportunity, express the deep conviction which possesses them. To them, earth and heaven, all actual observation, all past experience, all the conclusions of human reasoning, all the lessons of divine authority, agree in the same language, in bidding us remember our common relation to God our Maker and Redeemer, and in urging us to labour without ceasing, that as we are all brethren in respect of our common Father, so we may be brethren amongst ourselves, in the fulness of an equal affection.

SERMON XXXIV.¹

ACTS xxvii. 34.

Wherefore I pray you to take some meat : for this is for your health : for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

WHEN we assemble in this place to pray to God, and to be reminded of our duties towards him and towards each other, it is very certain that in one sense we ought to leave all worldly thoughts entirely behind us. Not only should all evil feelings be laid aside, all passions of pride, of anger, of lust, of covetousness,—all such things as at no time, and under no circumstances, ought to harbour in a Christian's bosom ; but other feelings not wrong in themselves, and in their own season good and useful, would be out of place and mischievous here. I mean, for instance, the worldly rewards or consequences of good conduct :—the wealth,

¹ Preached on receiving the account of the first appearance of the spasmodic cholera at Sunderland.

the honours, or the general good opinion, which often follow on the diligent discharge of our several duties,—on industry, on a proper exertion of our talents, and on general uprightness and benevolence. These feelings would be mischievous here, because they would stand in the way of something better. We come here to learn to think of God, of his rewards, of the honour that comes from Him, of the judgment which He will pass upon all our thoughts, and words, and deeds. I say, that we come here *to learn* to think of these things; for this is a lesson in which, I fear, we are none of us as yet perfect enough. It may be, that, to a perfect Christian, life in all its relations would be so thoroughly imbued, if I may so speak, with the Spirit of God, that thoughts of earthly blessings would never be separated from the thought of their Author; that the angels of God had been so long ascending and descending between heaven and earth, that the two were become as one; and the man's life on earth was in fact a life virtually passed in heaven. If there be any such, to them the word "worldliness," in its bad sense, has altogether lost its meaning: all their thoughts and all their feelings glorify God equally. But to us common men, this truly divine liberty of the Spirit is no rule for us; our thoughts of earth are still earthly; our love of earthly things must

be checked, nay, excluded sometimes altogether, lest it should stifle entirely in our hearts the love of God.

In this sense, then, worldly thoughts should be left behind us, when we assemble in the house of prayer. Worldly pleasures, however pure,—even the purest of all, those of the esteem and affection of the good and the wise,—should be shut out of our hearts, if possible, now. But worldly thoughts, in another sense, we must not shut out; for if we do, we meet here almost in vain. I mean, that our particular worldly duties must be closely present to us: we must remember who we are, and what we have to do; what are the temptations which are most likely to threaten us, what the duties which we find it hardest to practise. We must do this, or we cannot apply what we hear to our soul's profit; nay, we shall make our prayers very often a mere empty sound. Without this, our devotion is in the utmost danger of becoming fantastic and foolish: for neither moral truth nor intellectual is to be gained without a knowledge of particulars. And, therefore, to shun all thought of our own actual condition in common life, and of the state of the world around, is not wise; nor is it enough to recollect our general circumstances as men and as Christians, without also dwelling on our particular state, as living in such a time and

in such a country, in such a station of life, and with such and such public and private duties calling upon us to fulfil them.

In this sense, then, your thoughts here may, and ought to be, worldly, and our preaching also should be worldly: that is, we should both think, not indeed upon what we have to enjoy here, but on what we have to do here. And if unwonted public circumstances render our duties also peculiar,—if we live at a time when especial trials are threatening,—then it is unwise to neglect these appointed opportunities of arming ourselves with the armour of God, of considering what our enemy is, that so we may understand with what weapon he may be best resisted.

I need not tell you that this *is* a marked time; a time such as neither we, nor our fathers for many generations before us, have experienced. And to those who know what the past has been, it is no doubt awful to think of the change that we are now about to encounter; a change, awful indeed for the present, and very trying; but out of which the Christian, whether he judges from reason and experience only, or looks further to the light of God's word, has abundant reason to hope that the cause of Christ will signally triumph.

In considering, then, what part of the Scripture might furnish us with the lessons most needed

in this season, I was particularly struck with what is recorded of St. Paul's behaviour in the dangers of storm and shipwreck. This behaviour is such a perfect union of piety and manliness,—it is at once so strengthening, so composing, and so cheering,—that I could not forbear laying it before you on this present occasion, for your benefit, I trust, and for my own.

None of us, perhaps, have witnessed,—but all, surely, can fancy,—that nothing can be more dreadful, more trying to the firmness and to the spirits of those who are unused to it, than a dangerous storm at sea. We can understand, too, that, in St. Paul's time, owing to the greater ignorance of navigation, the danger would be even greater than at present. But, amidst all this, the language of the Apostle is perfectly firm and encouraging. And the secret of his confidence was, no doubt, his habitual trust in God; his being able to say, and not to say only, but to feel, that he was God's, and served God. But what is important to us to notice is, that there is nothing like enthusiasm, in the bad sense, in his conduct; nothing at all like exciting the feelings of his companions, and so giving them a momentary strength, to be succeeded immediately afterwards by a more helpless weakness. His language is sensible and manly; his counsels are the very best that a brave and wise man could give under the circumstances,

retaining his own presence of mind, and thus encouraging others, while he pointed out to them how they might usefully employ themselves.

I am not afraid particularly to notice the verse which I have chosen for my text. 'The ship's company had been highly excited in body and mind by the long continuance of the storm; they were in a state in which an appeal to their feelings might probably have been very successful. But St. Paul knew that no good could come out of the mere feelings engendered by a weakened body and an over-agitated mind. His object was first to compose and strengthen them. He calls them together, reminds them how much they wanted bodily support, and urges them to take some food to strengthen them. He then, to set them an example of the calmness which he recommended, took bread, and gave thanks to God before them all, and brake it, and began to eat. From his composed and collected, and cheerful spirit, the words of prayer and thanksgiving might fitly proceed to that God, who loves our reasonable, no less than our affectionate service. The effect of his words, and action, and manner, all so agreeing with one another,—all so glorifying the God who gives to his true servants whatever is lovely and noble, as well as whatever is devout and pure,—produced its natural impression upon those who witnessed it: "Then they all were of good cheer, and

they also took some meat ;” and afterwards they laboured actively and judiciously at the best means of saving the ship and themselves.

This conduct of St. Paul seems to me an exact pattern of the way in which we should behave in seasons of great and unwonted danger and alarm. And, to enable us to imitate it, we should earnestly pray and labour, before the time of danger be actually upon us. If we so do, we cannot, indeed, promise ourselves that, literally, there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of us ; but we shall immensely lessen the actual worldly danger, and we shall gain such an inestimable blessing, as will make the danger, let it be as great as it will, well worth the falling into. Indeed, I do think that all the circumstances of the disorder which has now just visited our country, are well fitted, if we use them rightly, to turn to our great and endless comfort, with as little cost of present chastisement as possible. What we all feel, I imagine, in our daily living,—and particularly so as we are younger and more thoughtless,—is a want of dwelling enough on the reality of death. Although we know that we must die sooner or later, yet we go on in a very habitual confidence that it will not happen soon. And, no doubt, the increased skill of modern physicians, increased cleanliness, and various other causes connected with our present civilization, have made the probabilities of life much

greater than they were in the days of our fathers. I cannot but think then, that it may serve very usefully to sober and awaken us, to know that there is a disease near us which spares no age, and against which no skill, no resources whatever of human ability, have proved a complete protection. I do think it very wholesome to know, that it is not a great improbability that any one of us here assembled, the youngest as well as the oldest, may, within a short period, be called away to give his account. And not less wholesome to know beforehand, (though, indeed, a most fearful aggravation to those who delay till it be too late,) is the fact, that it will be utterly vain to think of a death-bed repentance in this case : that the disease is so sudden and so powerful, that it is a mere impossibility for any one to dream of turning to God after it has once seized him, if he has not become at peace with him before. I repeat that, knowing as we must know our own weaknesses, and how fatally we are wasting our time in fancied security, we have great reason, I speak most sincerely, — we have great reason for blessing God, that he has sent us this merciful warning. But again, if this disease were like some of the older pestilences,—if its stroke were inevitable, and if it swept down its thousands in every place, then we might be overcome by our fear, and either sit down in helpless weakness, or run, as has been the case in older

times, into utter desperation. It has been well said, by Paley, that if sudden death were too common, it would palsy all the business of life; it would render such conduct as that of St. Paul,—at once calm, active, and cheerful,—a thing impossible. And, therefore, the great pestilences of former times have been awful judgments rather than warnings: they have produced little wholesome fruit; but have exhibited at once scenes of wild enthusiasm on the one hand, and of desperate wickedness on the other. But this present disease, while it is enough to give us wholesome warning, is not enough to unman or to palsy us. If it were raging amongst us, still, according to all former experience, the number of its victims would be comparatively small; the business of life need not be interrupted,—need not be performed less actively,—though it ought, and I do pray that it would be performed in a more Christian spirit. Again, though no human means are altogether a protection against this disease, yet they may do very much to lessen its dangers: the cheerful conduct of St. Paul would probably save us bodily, as it would be sure to save us spiritually. The calmly and actively taking the precautions that prudence would suggest, would have every prospect of not being taken in vain. It is then a shame to us, as men and as Christians, if we either let this disease teach us nothing of the faith of

Paul, or if it so far overcomes us as to hinder us from acting with Paul's sense and cheerfulness. "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is,"—understanding what his merciful will is, in sending us a warning so effectual, and yet so gentle;—so well fitted to make us turn to God in the spirit which God most loves. It is a warning, not to be slack in our worldly business, as if life were certainly just about to close;—not to leave off our usual and wholesome amusements, as if it were of no use to strengthen our bodies, and to brace our minds;—but it is a warning to us to leave off our sins,—it is a warning to us, that we lose no time in becoming at peace with God through Jesus Christ,—it is a warning to us to keep our lamps burning, or to go quick to get a fresh supply of oil, for, should the cry be heard of the Bridegroom's coming, he will be present almost as soon as we hear of it. It is a warning for you, and for me, that we should make life what it ought to be,—that we should be able to thank God before all men, with a sincere faith and trust in him,—that we should be his zealous and happy servants, whether he choose that we should serve him here, or before his throne in heaven.

ON THE RIGHT
INTERPRETATION AND UNDERSTANDING
OF
THE SCRIPTURES.

No question can be of greater importance to every man, than that which regards the right use of the Scriptures. The volume of the Old and New Testaments is received by Christians as their rule of life: they look to it as the source of all their religious knowledge, and all their hopes and fears beyond the grave; and as to the supreme guide of their principles and practice in this world. But that which holds good of God's natural gifts, holds good, also, of the revelation which he has been pleased to make to us of himself and of his will. It is not available to our use, without some efforts on our part; its benefits may remain hidden, nay, we may pervert it into absolute poison, unless we apply ourselves to it with a sound understanding, and a sincere and teachable heart.

As with God's other gifts also, so it is with the Scriptures, that the difficulties in applying them rightly become greater in proportion to our power of mastering them. This is a part of our trial, whose severity increases as we are able to bear it. A very ignorant man, therefore, and one who has no time to cultivate his understanding, is saved from perceiving the difficulty, which, if he did perceive it, he would be incapable of solving. Such a man, with the blessing of good elementary teaching, if he proceeds to read the Scriptures with a devout spirit and an honest purpose, finds in them all that is required for his own personal wants in belief and in conduct. There is much in them which he does not understand,—many benefits which he cannot extract from them,—many beautiful proofs of their divine original which he cannot discover or appreciate. But then he finds in them no perplexities,—he does not see the apparent incongruities out of which their perfect harmony is composed; if there is much which he cannot interpret at all, there is little which he misinterprets. This state, however, is one which an educated man cannot remain in. With greater powers and opportunities of discovering truth, he gains, unavoidably, a greater sensitiveness to apparent error or inconsistency,—a greater impatience of obscurity and confusion. It is vain for

such a man to envy the peace of ignorance; God calls him to the painful pursuit of knowledge, and he must not disobey the call. Nor may he, as some do, strive to do violence to his understanding, and to the very nature of things, by trying to combine knowledge with an undisturbed tranquillity of belief, to enjoy the pleasures of a clear and active mind, without being subject to its pains. He may not say, "Here I will have the comfort of a reasonable belief, and here of a blind one." It must be all reasonable, or all blind; otherwise it will soon vanish altogether, and be succeeded by unbelief. Besides, he has not only himself to think of, but others. It is a fatal stumbling-block to many when they see a professed advocate of Christianity shrinking from inquiry, and manifestly replying to their doubts, and silencing his own, by considerations wholly inconclusive as to the point at issue.

But I wish to consider particularly the case of the great majority of young men of the educated classes of society;—of all those, in short, who do not choose the ministry of the Church for their profession. Consider these men in the present age of intellectual activity; how much they will read, how much they will inquire, with what painful accuracy they will labour after truth in their several studies or pursuits. A mind thus disciplined, and acquiring, as it generally does in the

process, an almost over-suspiciousness of every thing which it has not sifted to the bottom, turns from its professional or habitual studies to that of the Bible. I say nothing at present of the existence of any moral obstacles to belief; let us merely consider the intellectual difficulties of the case. From his own early education, from the practice of the Church, from the common language of Christians, a young man of this description is led to regard the volume of the Old and New Testaments as containing God's revelation of himself to mankind;—he is taught that all its parts are of equal authority: but in what sense the revelation of the Old and New Testament is *one*, and all its parts of equal authority, he has probably never clearly apprehended nor thought of inquiring. He takes it then as *one*, in the simplest sense, and begins to read the Bible as if it were, like the Koran, all composed at one time, and addressed to persons similarly situated. His habits of mind render it impossible for him to read without inquiry: obscurities, apparent contradictions, and still more, what he would feel to be immoralities, cannot pass without notice. He turns to commentators of reputation, anxious to read their solution of all the difficulties which bewilder him. He finds them too often greatly insufficient in knowledge, and perhaps still more so in judgment; often misapprehending the whole difficulty of a question,

often answering it by repeating the mere assertions or opinions of others, and confounding the proper provinces of the intellect and the moral sense, so as to make questions of criticism, questions of religion, and to brand as profane, inquiries, to which the character of profaneness or devotion is altogether inapplicable. When the man is thus intellectually perplexed, undoubtedly all the moral obstacles within him to his embracing the Gospel beset him with tremendous advantage. I speak not only of positive obstacles, but of such as are negative;—the absence of devotional habits, and the want of an experimental knowledge of the power and living truth of the Gospel. There may be,—and how often is there!—an absence of these, without any hostile disposition towards Christianity; nay, with a general reverence and regard for it. For the time being, in many cases such as I have supposed, the struggle is mainly an intellectual one: the difficulty lies in the understanding, not in the heart. No doubt every day that this struggle continues, the foundation, at least, of moral difficulty is being laid: the heart cannot long hold aloof from being with Christ, without being seduced to turn against him. But, for the time, the heart might be firmly won if the intellect were satisfied; or, more properly, if, without being fully satisfied, it were at least put in the right way of becoming

so. Above all, it must be satisfied on those points where its difficulties have assumed a moral character; for here it feels itself warranted in requiring satisfaction: and even if it acknowledge the duty of submission on other points, it will insist that it never can be right to call evil, good,—or to ascribe the encouragement of evil to God. It seems to me, then, to be a work of great usefulness to endeavour to meet the wants of a mind so circumstanced,—to present such a view of the Scripture revelation as may enable a young man to read his Bible not only without constant perplexity, but with immense and increasing comfort and benefit.

In the first place, then, it should be remembered, that a command given to one man, or to one generation of men, is, and can be, binding upon other men, and other generations, only so far forth as the circumstances in which both are placed are similar. A commandment of eternal and universal obligation is one that relates to points in which all men at all times are alike, and which there is the same reason, therefore, for all obeying equally. Other commandments may be of a transitory nature, and binding only upon particular persons, or at particular times; but yet, when they proceed from the highest authority, their indirect use may be universal,

even although their direct use be limited. That is, from knowing what was God's will under such and such circumstances, we may gather, by parity of reasoning, what it will be, in all other circumstances; namely, the same when the circumstances are the same; analogous when the circumstances are analogous; and absolutely contrary, when they also are contrary.

It is these two rules, taken together, which will enable us to use the Old Testament, and, indeed, every part of God's revelation to man, at once fully and rightly. For while, on the one hand, they will prevent us from applying to ourselves commandments which we were never intended to obey; so, on the other hand, they will hinder us from neglecting any part of God's dealings with men, as if it was of no concern to us; whereas it is, in truth, of concern to us; and where it does not teach directly, it yet teaches according to the analogy of circumstances,—that as we should do the same under the same circumstances, so we should act analogously under analogous circumstances, and oppositely when the circumstances are opposite.

If it be said that all this renders the application of the Bible exceedingly difficult, and opens the door to a great deal of evasion, I answer, that undoubtedly the application of many parts of the Bible is difficult; and this is sufficiently proved by

the discordant and unsatisfactory manner in which different persons have actually applied them. And as to wilful evasion of God's commandments, that will ever be easy; I may add, that God designs it to be easy to all those who, at their own peril, choose to practise it. That the word of God should furnish a ready occasion of perversion to those who wish to pervert it, can surely surprise no one who has a moderate acquaintance with God's manner of dealing with us, either as declared in the course of his providence, or in his own revelation.

But for those who really seek to know God's will, this method of discovering it will be exceedingly useful, inasmuch as it leads directly to an accurate knowledge both of the Scriptures on the one hand, and of themselves and their own condition on the other. Every one must have observed the difficulty which persons in general feel in bringing home to themselves what they read, even in the New Testament. They have but vague notions either of the state of things to which Christ's words applied in the first instance, or of those points in themselves to which they apply no less forcibly now; whereas the principle, on which I have laid so much stress, requires of us a very exact and lively perception, first, of all the features of the case to which the Divine command originally was addressed, and then of

all the particulars of our own. It obliges us to consider carefully the purpose of the commandment, when first given, what evil it was intended to check, and what particular form the evil at that time wore. Thus separating what is essential in it from what is accidental, we learn what is God's will; and then, by looking into ourselves and around us, and observing what is the actual form in our own case of the evil opposed to his will, we discover exactly to what parts in our own character or conduct his commandment is virtually and really directed.

II. The revelations of God to man were gradual and adapted to his state at the several periods when they were successively made. And, on the same principle, commands were given at one time which were not given at another: and which, according to God's method of dealing with mankind, not only were not, but *could not have been given*. This brings us to the famous doctrine of *accommodation*, which having been carried by some persons to an extravagant and offensive length, has fallen, consequently, with many good men, into great suspicion. No doubt a man may abuse this doctrine, as the Nicolaitans did, and maintain that all God's commandments were but accommodations to man's imperfect state, which, in his riper knowledge, he might safely violate. But I am not considering how a

wicked man may pervert this doctrine, but how a good man may profit by it. The principle of accommodation is so expressly allowed by Christ himself, when he declares the liberty of divorce to have been given to the Jews, "on account of the hardness of their hearts," that the question amongst Christians respecting it can only be one of degree. But perhaps it will be desirable to show more fully how *accommodation* must exist in every relation from God to man, unless it were God's pleasure to change this world from a state of imperfection to one of perfection : in other words, he who argues against accommodation, as inconsistent with the Divine attributes, is but approaching unawares that great question of the origin of evil, which never has been solved by man, and probably never can be, until he be removed to a state where the *experience* of evil is no more.

In any communication between a Being of infinite knowledge and one of finite, it is obvious that the former must speak sometimes according to the views of the latter, unless it be his pleasure to raise him almost to his own level. In short, unless revelation be universal ; that is, unless it extend to the removal of all error, and the communication of all truth, there must be an accommodation in it to the opinions of mankind, on all points where those opinions are not meant to be

specially corrected. When God chooses a being of finite knowledge to be the medium of his revelations, it is at once understood that the faculties of this being are left in their natural state, except so far as regards the especial message with which he is entrusted. But, perhaps, we do not enough consider how in the very message itself, there must be a mixture of accommodation to our ignorance;—for complete knowledge, on any one point, could not be given without extending itself to other points;—nay, the very means by which we receive all our knowledge, that is, language, and the observations of our senses, are themselves so imperfect, that they could not probably convey to the mind other than imperfect notions of truth. This, again, is allowed for, at least professedly, in interpreting those expressions which the Scripture employs to describe the dealings of God with men: the “wrath,” “jealousy,” “repentance,” &c., of the Divine Being; and, much more, his “sitting on high in heaven,” his “right hand,” “eyes,” “ears,” &c., are acknowledged to be accommodations; that is, to convey to us, not the very reality, but something as near the reality as God sees it expedient for us to know. But in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, the necessity of this accommodation becomes more evident. When God dwelt among us, and vouchsafed to

converse daily with us, it is manifest that Infinity, thus communing with his finite creatures, must have adapted himself to their notions, or else he would have altered their nature to something far above humanity. He must have often spoken as a man who possessed no greater knowledge than the men of that time and country. We cannot, therefore, argue that all the opinions which Christ did not contradict he sanctioned with Divine authority;—nay, he must have used himself the common language of men, if it were a point on which no revelation was intended to be made. And to say that this is to mislead mankind, is untrue, as well as irreverent, unless we are prepared to show how otherwise God could possibly have communed with mankind without making his revelation extend to every thing.

This, then, is accommodation, so far as regards our knowledge.—Another sort of accommodation regards our practice.—That God has not thought proper to raise mankind at once to its highest state of moral perfection, any more than individuals are born at once to their maturity, is a matter of actual experience. Why he has so willed it, is a question which it is vain to ask; and, because vain, presumptuous.—The human species has gone through a state of less fulness of moral knowledge, of less enlightened con-

science, as compared with its subsequent attainments, just as every individual has done. Now this less perfect state being a part of God's will, the training applied to it must have been suited to it? that is, it must have taken it as imperfect, and dealt with it as such; not anticipating the instructions of a more perfect state, but improving it in its imperfection; not changing spring into summer, but making of spring the best that could be made of it. At the same time the progress of mankind was to be provided for; perfection was to be prepared for, although not immediately made attainable. While, therefore, general principles of duty were given, all the conclusions which follow from them, with regard to our particular relations in life, were not at the same time developed; and men did not at once develop them for themselves. Their notions, therefore, on many particular points of practice, were really irreconcilable with the principles which they acknowledged; but the inconsistency did not strike them; and revelation did not as yet interfere to make it palpable. This was an imperfection which belonged to their state of moral inexperience: and this imperfection God allowed, and treated individuals as good and just persons, notwithstanding their participation in it, if up to the extent of their knowledge they endeavoured to do what was right.

But further, this imperfect moral knowledge on many particular points of practice being allowed, if an action on any one of these points was capable of strengthening their moral principle generally, or tended to serve any other useful end, it would properly be commanded to *them*, however inconsistent it might be with more enlightened notions of particular duty. It might be commanded *them*, because it could do *them* no moral harm, but probably the contrary; and because, being a command in a particular case, and not a statement of a general principle, it could not justly interfere with the acquisition of purer views by future generations, when the dispensation of the fulness of time was come. And, therefore, not only would practices be tolerated by God in early times, but actions would positively be commanded, which, in a more advanced state of knowledge, men would be taught of God to shrink from as evil.

Now, from God's way of dealing with the childhood and youth of the human race, we may expect to derive a lesson for ourselves, in our treatment of the childhood and youth of an individual. We find exactly the same state of mind; that is to say, sound general principles acknowledged, but the application of them to particular cases of practice not yet made, and, therefore, the notions of right and wrong, in

particular branches of conduct, confused and faulty. And our object being the formation of a perfect character in manhood, we must not mar this prospect by seeking to forestal it; we must not be too anxious to enlighten the conscience ere it be sufficiently strengthened; it being much more important to keep up the habit of obeying conscience implicitly, than to extend unseasonably its nominal dominion, at the risk of weakening its real hold upon the mind. Of course, the aids afforded by Christianity enable us to enlighten the conscience earlier and more fully than we could dare to do without it, because they render obedience to conscience a matter of less hopeless difficulty. Still, while inculcating on a child's mind the principles of Christianity in all their purity, I should hesitate to press upon him all the deductions which follow from those principles, with regard to the various points of his own daily life. I should feel that he would not be able to bear them; that is to say, that his character would not have strength enough to conform to so pure a standard, and that it would be injurious to his future excellence, were I to familiarize him to the habit of acting constantly against his sense of duty.

A similar forbearance of instruction, amounting sometimes to an actual prohibition of what would be a duty in a more advanced state of moral

proficiency, is practised also for another reason. When an action, right in itself, is almost sure to be performed from a wrong motive, we feel bound to prohibit it altogether; when an action, wrong in itself, is yet likely to be abstained from with a moral injury to the character, while its commission, owing to the unenlightened state of the conscience, would be attended with no harm at all, we should be afraid to see it foreborne. Who dares do otherwise than forbid his children to inform him, unasked, of the faults of one another? — Who would not be sorry to see a boy submitting passively to all sorts of ill usage from his companions, since, with a boy's notions of right and wrong, resistance would involve no breach of duty, while passiveness would imply and tend to encourage the habit of cowardice?

Undoubtedly the principle here spoken of is one of most difficult application; because as the standard of duty may not be too high for the strength of the character to bear, so, on the other hand, unless we are careful gradually to raise it, that excellence which is the object of education will never be attained at all. Still, however liable to be misapplied, it is a principle which God's dealings with the earlier ages of the human race strongly sanction, and which, though liable to abuse in our hands like every other rule of conduct, was employed by him with unmingled usefulness.

These two considerations then,—That Commandments given to persons differently circumstanced from ourselves, while they are not directly binding on us so far as this difference extends, are yet a most valuable guide indirectly and by analogy; and that God's revelations to man, including in this term both communications of knowledge, and directions for conduct, were adapted to his state at the several periods when they were successively made, so that actions may be even commanded at one period which, at another, men would have learnt to be evil, and which never, therefore, could be commanded to *them*;—these two considerations will enable a young man, not only to read the Bible without perplexity, but to find in all of it, in the older dispensation no less than the new, a consistent and all-sufficient guide for his daily living.

To exemplify these two principles fully would be to write a commentary on a large portion of the Old Testament. But, in order to illustrate my meaning, I will give one or two instances of the application of each, to which an attentive reader may easily add others in the course of his own study of the Scriptures.

1. The second commandment of the Decalogue forbids the making any representation whatever of the object of our worship. The principle of this commandment was to prevent us from forming

unwarranted, and therefore necessarily unworthy, notions of God. (Compare Deuteronomy iv. 15—19.) “Ye saw no similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire;”—no similitude therefore was warranted to them by God, and none might be lawfully imagined by them for themselves. The spirit of this commandment is eternal; man may never image to himself an object of worship, without the warrant of God. They then violate this commandment most flagrantly, who think of God otherwise than his revealed word authorizes;—who imagine him to be less pure and holy, less severe against sin, less requiring perfect goodness in his creatures, than he himself declares himself to be. They also violate it, who dare to image, in any bodily form, the invisible and incomprehensible Father of all things.¹ And they too seem to violate it, who, not believing of God as he teaches us, would fain approach him through the mediation of his creatures, and go to him by another way than that only one which he has appointed, the mediation of his Son, Jesus Christ. But most assuredly they do not violate

¹ And though some of the best Christians have allowed themselves to do it, I cannot but think that to speak of the Holy Spirit as a dove, from a misapplication, and even a misinterpretation of a passage in Scripture, is a violation of the spirit of this commandment.

it, who represent him, who think of him, who worship him, under an image which he himself has sanctioned — the human form of the man Christ Jesus. For *this* similitude of God, we have God's warrant;—he showed no likeness of himself when he spake in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; but he has shown one to the Christian Church, when “the express Image of his Person” took upon him the nature of man, in order visibly to declare Him who, in his own essence, is invisible. And therefore to object to this warranted similitude of God, and to deny ourselves the benefits which it was graciously intended to furnish,—to turn from the image of Christ crucified¹ which God himself has given us, because we

¹ I say the image of “Christ crucified,” because representations of our Lord as a *child* do appear to me unwarranted, and only to have been introduced for the sake of the representation of the Virgin, which always accompanies them. Nor do I deny that where the New Testament is kept out of the people's hands, and their knowledge of Christianity is corrupted with many superstitions, the crucifix may be often an object of superstitious worship; so that, very possibly, the English reformers were right at that time in doing away with the use of it. But I cannot conceive it otherwise than useful, where the Scriptures are generally circulated, and where Christianity is truly known; and as it may be most dangerous where men are most attached to it, so I think it is most wanted where the feeling against it would be the strongest, as in England at this moment, and still more in Scotland.

may not make images of our own devices,—seems to me an instance of the great mischief of applying to ourselves, directly, what was commanded to men under different circumstances, and with especial relation to that difference. While, on the other hand, to speak of the commandment as altogether obsolete, and to exclude it altogether from the Decalogue, as the Roman Catholics do in some of their popular catechisms, is an irreverent rejection of God's law, which must be eternal in its direct purport, so far as the circumstances are the same ; and most useful indirectly, even where the circumstances are different.

2. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac ; and Abraham's ready obedience is one of the most striking instances on record, of self-devoting faith. A writer in the "Morning Watch," while combating the view taken of the Old Testament by a writer in the "Edinburgh Review," speaks of this as "God's approbation of an act of infanticide." He chooses, I suppose, to use the offensive term *infanticide*, in order to express his belief that virtue and obedience are synonymous terms, and that what God commands, be it what it may, becomes instantly our duty to perform. A far more cautious and wiser writer, and one never to be named without respect, Bishop Butler, has made a wide distinction between principles and habits, and individual

actions. "God," he says, "could not command us to cultivate habits of deceit and cruelty ; but he may command us to take away life in particular cases, because that is not in itself necessarily wrong." This is perfectly true ; but though all taking away life is not wrong, yet can it be otherwise than wrong, according to an enlightened view of our duty, for a father to take away the life of his innocent son, and to imagine himself, by such an act, offering an acceptable sacrifice to God ? And the question is, whether our notions of God himself are not rather derived from those notions of goodness which he has implanted in us, than our notions of goodness derived from our idea of God : whether, therefore, it is not a contradiction to imagine God as commanding an act which to our best reason, appears evil ; and whether in our ignorance of the unseen world, any vision, dream, or revelation whatsoever, so commanding us to evil, can bear with it an external attestation of its coming from God, sufficient to counterbalance the internal evidence that it does not come from him ; —whether, in short, a sane mind is not bound to consider such a suggestion or command as coming from an evil spirit, and permitted by God for the trial of his faith, rather than as the real will of God for the guidance of his conduct. I confess that if we suppose the external and

internal evidence, with respect to any message professing to come from God to be thus opposed to one another, I see not how the human mind can escape from the agony of such a conflict but through insanity.

But now apply to the case of Abraham the principle which has been developed above; and not only does every difficulty vanish, but the story remains fraught with instruction for God's people, in every age, let their advancement in moral knowledge be what it will. Human sacrifices, and particularly the sacrifice of children by their parents, were notoriously practised by the nations of Canaan. (Deut. xii. 31.) By the Moabites they were considered as the greatest possible mark of devotion, and performed, therefore, in circumstances of extraordinary peril, as the means of obtaining deliverance when every less precious offering was unavailing. (Compare Micah vi. 7, and 2 Kings iii. 27.) So many years before God had declared his abhorrence of such sacrifices, in a time and country where they were practised as the most solemn rite of religion, and with the natural feeling so strongly prompting us to think that God will be propitiated by that which it costs us most to offer, — what reason is there for thinking that the command to sacrifice his son Isaac was received by Abraham in any other light than as a com-

mand to a most painful duty, severely trying, indeed, to his feelings, but in no way startling to his conscience?—And this is exactly the trial of faith which has been given to so many of Abraham's spiritual children; not that they have ever been commanded to do what they thought evil, but what they knew was severely painful,—to part with what they loved most dearly for God's sake. The particular sort of sacrifice commanded to Abraham could not indeed be commanded to us, because *we* have learnt from God that such offerings are an abomination which he hateth: but analogously the trial is often repeated now, and fathers are still called upon, from time to time, to sacrifice their children's fairest earthly prospects, in order that they may obey the will of God.

I know there are some persons who cannot bear to suppose that Abraham was less aware than we are of the wickedness of human sacrifices in general, because they believe that he was, in all points of duty, no less enlightened than the most enlightened Christian. Do they think, then, that polygamy is a matter of indifference; or do they imagine that Abraham, judging of it as Christians do, yet lived habitually in known sin? Or what is the meaning of our Lord's declaration, that the least in the kingdom of God was greater than John the Baptist, than

whom there had arisen, among all that were born of women, no greater prophet? Or how should the prophets and righteous men of old have desired, and desired in vain, to see and hear what Christ's apostles saw and heard, if they already had known as much as Christ, or his Spirit, could have taught them?

I proceed to another example of the same principle,—the command given to Saul to destroy the Amalekites utterly, and his punishment for disobeying it. In this case, as in the command to extirpate the Canaanites, the precise point of difficulty is often misapprehended. Undoubtedly the destruction effected by an earthquake or a pestilence is just as unsparing and indiscriminate, without being thought to impeach the goodness of God. The difficulty relates not to the sufferers in this destruction, but to the agents of it; because to men, in an advanced state of moral knowledge and feeling, the command to perpetrate such general slaughter, — to massacre women and infants, the sick and the decrepit, could not fail to be mischievous; or rather, it would be so revolting, that they could not, and ought not to think that God could possibly be the author of it. To men in the Christian stage of their moral progress, a command to trample the feelings of humanity under foot, and to acquire that brutality which is the inevitable result of such a conquest,

could not but be injurious ; at an earlier stage, or at a more advanced one, the case is different ; half-civilized men, who have not risen to these feelings, or glorified saints, who need them not, because they are arrived at a state above the passions of humanity, may be the executioners of God's judgments ; but the disciples of the Son of Man must, like their Master, not destroy men's lives, but save them. Now, in Saul's time, and long afterwards, the laws of war, if so they may be called, were so thoroughly barbarous, that no amount of slaughter, committed against enemies, was likely to shock the feelings of any one. Every one knows the passage in Homer (*Iliad* VI. 55—62) in which the poet expresses his approbation of the advice given by Agamemnon to Menelaus, not to spare a single Trojan, young or old, even to the babe in its mother's womb. In such a state of feeling, when lives were spared, it was not from humanity, but from avarice or lust ; and, therefore, the command given to the Israelites under Joshua, and again to Saul, when attacking the Amalekites, to destroy every thing, and take none of the spoil to themselves, so far from hurting their notions of right and wrong, was in fact a trial of their self-denial ; it called upon them to renounce the ordinary fruits of victory, the slaves, the female captives, the cattle, and the silver and gold, and to act merely

as men who fought for God, and not for themselves. This command Saul could not persuade himself to obey: he spared the best of the spoil, of the sheep and of the oxen, for the purpose of having a great sacrificial feast; he spared Agag, to have the glory of exhibiting a captive king eating bread under his table. He could not, certainly, plead humanity as his motive, inasmuch as the women and children had been destroyed, so far as appears, without any scruple felt or pretended. In short, the command was no more shocking, from its requiring the Amalekites to be slaughtered rather than kept as slaves, than it would be now, if a general were ordered to destroy the cannon and baggage that he had taken, instead of keeping them as a source of prize-money. Such an order might be very disappointing, and might be a hard trial to his obedience; but certainly could not be objected to, as commanding what he could scruple, on conscientious grounds, to execute.

These instances will sufficiently explain my meaning, and will show, I think, how completely the principle which they illustrate will remove all the principal difficulties of the Old Testament. One more I will notice, because it was quoted by Carlile, some years ago, in his defence on a charge of blasphemy. He read aloud, in court, the seventeenth and eighteenth verses of the

thirty-first chapter of Numbers, containing the command of Moses to spare only the virgins among the women of Midian, and to destroy all the rest. And he then asked if it was possible to believe that a book, containing such atrocities, could ever have proceeded from God. Certainly God would never give such a command to any one whose moral feelings would be shocked by it; but they to whom it was addressed felt it only as a restraint on their self-indulgence; they were not allowed to plunge into those sensual excesses to which the grown-up women of Midian were addicted, as a part of their religious rites.

How little men, at a much later period, were likely to scruple morally at the act of putting such a number of women to death, may be judged of from the sweeping execution of all the female slaves of their household by Ulysses and Telemachus, in the *Odyssey*, and by the utterly indifferent, or rather almost exulting manner, in which the poet describes their sufferings.

What have been now given are general rules of interpretation, which should, I think, be constantly borne in mind throughout the study of the Scriptures, and which will remove some of their principal difficulties. Others, however, still remain; and it is of importance to know how they should severally be dealt with, for the treatment which they require is by no means

uniform. They may be mostly divided into three classes: first, such as are decidedly of a religious character; second, such as are mixed; and, thirdly, such as are not religious at all, but belong solely to the critic, the historian, or the antiquary.

Of the first sort, by far the most important is that which has been already noticed; namely, that we find the Bible ascribing to God certain commandments which appear inconsistent with sound notions of right and wrong. Other difficulties have rather led men to adopt strange and unwarranted interpretations of the Scripture text, than to deny its authority; they have, in other words, produced heretics rather than infidels. I am speaking now of such passages as bear upon the leading doctrines of Christianity, or upon the great question of free-will and the Divine foreknowledge, which belongs properly to natural religion. There being sects, within the Christian Church itself, who maintain the most opposite opinions on these matters, yet alike acknowledge the authority of the Scripture, an individual who is perplexed with the obvious meaning of the Bible, takes refuge with those whose difficulty has been the same as his own, and learns from them to find another way of explaining it, without renouncing his Christian belief altogether. And as the mind is apt to be convinced of what it

wishes, so a very sincere belief in the Scriptures has been found united with the most violent misinterpretations of them ; and the consequence has been thus far beneficial, that many parts of them, not connected with the disputed point, have yet influenced the heart and conduct, while, had there been no such refuge as heresy for the doubting mind, it would have been driven into complete infidelity. As these matters, therefore, do not constitute an objection to the Divine authority of the Scriptures, but only to the common interpretation of them, they need not be noticed here.

The remaining difficulties of a purely religious character are but variations of the oldest recorded expression of unbelief, "Ye shall not surely die;" that is, they either relate to the declarations so often made in Scripture of the final and undying wrath of God against the evil doers, or to those passages which speak of God as hardening the hearts of the wicked, and purposely withholding from them instruction, that they might perish in their sins. Now, if an objection to these statements be made with anything of a careless spirit, or in a time and place unfavourable to moral impressions, it is impossible that it should ever be satisfied. The objector, under such circumstances, becomes himself an evidence of the very truth which he disputes : his difficulty will not

be lessened, but rather increased upon him; and God will vouchsafe to him no other answer than such as may blind his eyes and harden his heart more entirely. But if any one were to express to me, privately and seriously, his uneasiness under these doctrines; and if this uneasiness should appear, so far as man could judge, to be purely intellectual, I would then press upon his mind some such considerations as the following,—considerations addressed to him morally and personally, to dispose him, with God's blessing, to receive the truth of God, and not in any degree to alter, in this matter, the truth of God, that it might please him.

“As a Christian,” I would say to him, “you are aware that the doctrine of Christ crucified is the great foundation of Christianity. Now this doctrine tells us that there are two things which we never can estimate highly enough,—God's abhorrence of sin, on the one hand, and his love for sinners on the other. Both of these were shown to the utmost, in his giving his only begotten Son to die for us. If the Scriptures seem to dwell upon this as furnishing particularly a proof of his love for sinners, it is because his abhorrence of sin is necessarily implied in it, as it is this only which rendered so great a proof of his love needful. Now, here too, as in his life, Christ affords a lesson to us. His death exhibits a

perfect union of the two qualities which are together the perfection of man's nature,—the hatred of sin and the love of sinners; in other words, the love of God, and the love of our neighbour. Our love of Him whom we have never seen, nor can see, must consist chiefly in striving to be like Him; that is, in abhorring evil, and showing love to those whom we have seen, even our human brethren. In neither of these points are we ever nearly perfect: it is rarely that they are laboured after equally. Rude times tempt to zeal without charity; more civilized times, ours more particularly, are apt to encourage charity without zeal. To us, therefore, the severer aspect of God's countenance is especially salutary: all that shows his abhorrence of sin is a lesson which we greatly need. His judgment can pronounce—what we dare not—when, and in what cases, love for the sinner must give place in His dealings with him, to His abhorrence of his sin. He declares that there *are* such times and such cases, to warn us lest ours be one of them. Death is one of these periods, when mercy's work is finally ended: but it may be that spiritual death may sometimes anticipate the death of the body. That this *is* so in any particular case, whether our own or others, we never are warranted to say or to think: but we may, and should notice, all those symptoms, which, if not stopped in time, may lead to it. God sometimes

sees fit to harden the heart of a sinner: it is one of the laws of His providence, that evil persisted in should grow more inveterate; that opportunities misused or rejected should be worse than negatively lost; that falsehood wilfully tampered with should at last actually persuade him who uttered it; that truth resisted by any one carelessly or dishonestly, should seem at last to be as untrue as he at first insincerely asserted it to be. So God withholds instruction, and leads men to believe a lie: so he hardens their hearts that they should not repent and be saved. Of all desperate follies, to kick against this truth is the fondest: embrace it, and no lesson can be fraught with diviner power of healing. Not only every downward step taken, but every upward step delayed, is a beginning of this blinding and of this hardening. Murmur against the justice of this process, and its operation becomes the surer and the speedier. Pray to God to save you from it, through Jesus Christ, and its grasp instantly becomes relaxed, and hope, and faith, and love, will soon deliver you from it altogether. But yesterday it was God hardening your heart, lest you should believe and be saved: to-day it is, "God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live."

III. I proceed to notice those scripture difficulties which are of a mixed character; that is, partly religious, and partly critical, historical, or

scientific. And this brings us to the objections taken against the scripture miracles, and to the manner in which it has been attempted to obviate them. I call these difficulties of a mixed character, because they rest partly upon an unwillingness to admit the reality of miracles at all, and partly upon the alleged improbability of any particular miracle, either from the low degree of external testimony in its favour, or from the circumstances of the case. It is greatly to be wished that every man who objects to any of the scripture narratives would clearly understand and express how far his objection rested on one of these grounds, and how far on the other. If it be founded on the alleged impossibility of all miracles, it is idle to discuss the degree of evidence belonging to any one miracle in particular; for no one, I suppose, would prove the general proposition, that miracles are impossible, by the accident that all those hitherto reported rest on insufficient evidence. Recourse would rather be had to *à priori* arguments,—that they were impossible from the nature of things, and that therefore the degree of evidence alleged in their favour, in any particular case, was a matter of absolute indifference. But, on the other hand, if a man allows that miracles are possible, and that they are therefore credible, if well attested, the question, as far as religion is concerned, turns wholly on the truth of a single miracle,—

the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If this be false, the truth of all the other miracles recorded in Scripture would not warrant our faith as Christians ;—if it be true, the falsehood of all the rest would be no excuse for our renouncing the Gospel. It is true that if St. John's account of the raising of Lazarus could be proved to be false, it would be a strong argument against our believing his account of the resurrection of Christ ; but, supposing for a moment that all the other miracles in his Gospel were proved interpolations,—so that his testimony went only to prove our Lord's resurrection, and that for this it was judged sufficient,—then the falsehood of all other miracles recorded in Scripture, would not overthrow our Christian faith, so long as we had the internal evidence afforded by the scripture prophecies, doctrines, and principles of life, together with the one single fact, that Christ rose again from the dead. For, after all, the great question of faith or unbelief is this,—“ May I hope that my sins are forgiven, that my evil nature will be corrected, and that I shall be happy for ever with God ? May I trust Christ, that, if I lose my life for his sake,—that is, in doing what he commands, I shall find that my loss is my eternal gain ? If I may hope this, and safely trust Christ's word, then my Christian faith stands sure ; if I may not, then my faith is vain, I am yet in my sins, and without hope beyond the grave.” On

the other hand, if a man would rather have no prospect beyond the grave,—if he cares not for being left *in* his sins, so long as he is not obliged to renounce them,—if he only wishes to be assured that by seeking his life in this world he shall not lose it eternally, he has gained nothing, unless he can disprove the fact that Christ died and rose again from the dead. His proving every miracle in the Old Testament to be untrue would no more justify his unbelief, than his being able to disprove all the alleged miracles of the dark ages. For unbelief can never be innocent, unless it were inevitable; every difficulty in the Scriptures may be an excuse for it, if we are seeking for excuses; but he who loves God and virtue will cling to them, not till he can find an excuse for quitting them, but till he finds it impossible to abide with them.

As for the general argument against all miracles, I own that I have never been able to comprehend its force, except on grounds of atheism or epicurism. Of course, it is self-evident, that, if there is no God, or if he regards not the affairs of men, there can be no miracle; and it is, I believe, on these assumptions, tacitly made though not avowed, that the main opposition to miracles has been founded. But, on deistical grounds, the objection is absurd, which, indeed, may be said of every other deistical argument against Christianity. The real question is between God, the Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ, and no God at all, or an epicurean one. The occasion for miracles is simply this,—that without them all our notions of another life must be no better than guesses. Neither the ideas of perfect wisdom and goodness, nor yet the idea of infinite power, make up, by themselves, our idea of God; but their union produces it instantly. Doctrines and principles of life, however perfect, therefore, may command our belief and obedience on account of their truth and excellence; but they do not bear upon them the mark of such an immediately divine original, as to satisfy us that he who delivers them can really tell us any thing of that which eye has not seen nor ear heard; namely, what will befall us after death. But a miracle, which implies supernatural power, when wrought by one whose life and doctrines are good and pure, completes our notion of God being really with him. And, if God be with him, he may be believed when he speaks of those things, of which we otherwise could not have obtained more than a mere conjecture. This use of miracles applies to the most enlightened man alive, as well as to the most ignorant;—to the purest lover of virtue for its own sake, no less than to him whose knowledge of duty is least clear, and his attachment to it most wavering. But take the bulk of mankind, and they need authority not only for things which man's loftiest faculties cannot discover,

but for those also which, without being really doubtful, have yet been constantly doubted of and disputed,—for those truths which, though discoverable, have not been in fact discovered. It might have pleased God, certainly, to leave us to ourselves on these points, nor could we have justly complained if he had done so. But that he should have graciously interposed to aid us, and that he should have vouchsafed by manifestations of superhuman power to give that *authority* to the language of truth which from our weakness it needed, may be, and is, a great instance of his abundant love to us, but cannot surely be regarded as inconsistent with the perfections of his nature, or with the wants of ours.

Now, with regard to the truth or falsehood of the several miracles of the Old Testament, as the very fact of discussing the evidence of any one alleged miracle is a tacit admission that miracles are not universally impossible, so the conceivable results of disproving any one or more of these can be no more than the following:—1st, To disprove, not the general truth, but simply the *inspiration* of the particular book, or portion of a book, in which the account of the alleged miracle occurs. 2d, If the book be ascribed to a writer who, from his means of information, could not have given a false account ignorantly or from misinformation, but must have knowingly intended to

deceive, then the disproof of any statement contained in it tends either to disprove its being really the work of that writer, or, if it be, to shake his general credibility. 3d, If the miracles supposed to be disproved are alleged by the writer of the narrative as the attestation of the divinity of certain commandments and doctrines, then the truth of the revelation may be thought to be disproved also, as resting upon a prop which has been discovered to be rotten. 4th, If the truth of the revelation so disproved be necessarily implied by a subsequent revelation, so that if the former be false, the latter must be false also, then the disproof of the former involves in itself the disproof of the latter ; and if these two be the only alleged revelations in existence, then the disproof of the first of them is equivalent to the disproof of all actual revelation whatever.

It is manifest, that the last of these results is the only one which concerns our own personal Christian faith ; and here it is that I should apply what has been said above, that this faith depends on the truth or falsehood of one miracle only—the resurrection of Christ. For it is now a question, not as to miracles universally, but as to the evidence of certain ones in particular ; if, therefore, the evidence for the resurrection be completely satisfactory, the truth of the former revelation, notwithstanding its disproved miracles, may as fairly be concluded from the truth of the latter

one, as the falsehood of the latter, notwithstanding its proved miracle, may be argued from the falsehood of the former one. And, if we suppose the external evidence to be balanced, then a good man's faith will be upheld by his strong sense of the internal evidence, and he will be reasonably a Christian ; while a bad man will have got an excuse for resisting the internal evidence, and will refuse the offer of salvation more obstinately. So that the utmost conceivable result of the disproof of the Old Testament miracles would be only to make belief and unbelief more palpably moral qualities ; they would become respectively, in a more eminent degree than ever, the signs of those who were saved, and those who were lost.

I should therefore dispute the practical force of the fourth result, even if I allowed the third : but I should deny the third altogether. Again, taking my stand on the truth of Christianity, as proved by the fact of the resurrection, and considering the prophecies of the Old Testament, its doctrines, and its commandments, together with the undisputed historical facts relating to the Jewish nation, I should argue, that the Jewish dispensation was of divine origin ; that the Jewish people were chosen by God for certain great purposes connected with the spiritual improvement of mankind ; that he had given to them the knowledge of himself and of his will, and had declared through his prophets, the

promise of a future Redeemer, even though all the miracles contained in the book of Exodus could be proved to be exaggerations or inventions. If this could be proved, it would follow indeed that Moses, or the author of the statement contained in Exodus, if he were any other than Moses, had committed a pious fraud; that the Israelites, not content with the internal evidence of Divine interposition manifested in their escape from the superstitions of Egypt, and in their receiving a law so pure from priestcraft, so righteous and so wise in its ordinances, and conveying notions of God so infinitely above those entertained by all other nations, had magnified certain natural phenomena into direct miracles, and had been persuaded by their law-giver that he had received his law, written on tables of stone by the finger of God, whereas he had in fact received it written on his heart and mind by that God who is the Author of all wisdom. The divinity of the Mosaic dispensation would then rest to our minds on its own intrinsic evidence, crowned as it is by Christianity; nor would its truth be affected because it had been once asserted and believed on fictitious grounds, any more than the truth of Trinitarianism is shaken because it was received in Spain as the national faith, on the authority of a pretended miracle performed in proof of it by the Catholic clergy.

But, the same considerations which would make me still believe in the divinity of the Mosaic dispensation, *even if its miraculous evidence could be disproved*, tend forcibly to remove the objections against that evidence, and to render the miracles themselves in no way improbable. To us who see the scheme in its whole completeness,—who are actually tasting the fruit of the seed then sown, and who, from our far more extensive experience of human nature, are more surely able to judge what knowledge under any given circumstances is above the reach of man's unassisted faculties,—to us the evidence of external miracles may not be required to prove its divine origin. But to those who saw it at its commencement only, it could have no other attestation:—to believers and unbelievers the “mighty works,” by which it was accompanied, were then the most intelligible sign that it was “the Lord's doing.” And what if, in some instances, the miracle consists to us in the *adaptation* of a natural phenomenon to the time and place when its effects were needed, while they who saw it, believed, from their inexperience, that not only that particular occurrence of it, but its whole existence was a special interposition of God,—does this really lessen the miraculousness of the case, or impeach the value of the narrative that records it?

Again; even the second supposed result of the

disproof of any of the miracles of the Old Testament does not follow so clearly as we might have at first sight imagined. For, a false statement of a miracle in confirmation of what the writer believes to be a valuable truth, is precisely a pious fraud ; and it is hard and unjust to say, that the general credibility of a narrative is shaken, because its author does not scruple at a practice, which in one form or other has commended itself to the consciences of many good men, even in enlightened times, and which in an age of ignorance the ablest men, as well as the best, have been found to sanction. I shall not be supposed to be inclined to defend it, or to insinuate that there is any ground for imputing it to the sacred historians: I only wish to urge, that *even though they could be proved to be guilty of it*, yet it would be a disregard to truth of a particular kind, and on one particular point, which might be perfectly compatible with strict veracity on other occasions. To judge otherwise would be something like the folly of Whitaker, who impeaches the general credit of Tacitus as an historian, because the speech which he has ascribed to the Emperor Claudius, in favour of admitting the Gauls to the rights of Roman citizenship, has been proved to be fictitious, by the accidental preservation of a record of the speech actually delivered.

The first result, however, would follow undoubtedly, not only from the disproof of a miracle, but from any error or exaggeration in the detail of

any event whatever. It would follow clearly that the narrative into which any error, however trifling, had found its way, could not have been written by divine inspiration. I do not mean that, if the history of a divine revelation were incorrect in any trifling point, we could argue that the revelation itself must be false;—far from it; the revelation may be truly a revelation; but it would be clear that the history of it could be no more than a human production, and as such, not incapable of error, even though substantially true.

Now it will appear that the remaining difficulties in the Scriptures, such, namely, as are not of a religious character, together with the objections urged against particular miracles, on the ground of some alleged improbability in the narrative of them, are of a nature, for the most part, not to invalidate the *truth of revelation*, but merely the *inspiration of the historical record of it*. It is only the *inspiration* of the books of the Scripture, and not their general *truth*, and far less the truth of the revelations recorded in them, that is, or can be, affected by the great majority of objections, critical, scientific, historical and chronological, which have been brought at different times against various parts of the Bible. By the eagerness with which they have been urged and repelled, one would imagine that our Christian faith depended upon their issue, whereas in fact it has been

wholly unconcerned in the dispute. For instance, the authority of the Acts of the Apostles as a trustworthy history, has been most satisfactorily made out, both from the general tone and character of the narrative, and from numerous instances of the author's very accurate knowledge of the state of things at the time which he treats of. Is it then to be overthrown by the discovery of *three* inaccuracies, supposing them to be so—that is, a mistake as to the circumstances preceding and accompanying the death of Judas; an anachronism as to the story of Theudas, in the speech ascribed to Gamaliel; and an oversight in the speech of Stephen, as to the person of whom Abraham bought his burial-place? No man would ever dream of attacking the authenticity of a good history on grounds so frivolous; but they become important if we make the authenticity of the Scripture History synonymous with its inspiration; for as God is incapable of the minutest error, as much as of the gravest, any one of these mistakes, if made out to be such, is sufficient to prove, that the history in which it occurs could not have been written by inspiration.

There seems to have been such an inveterate confusion in men's minds between the character of the events recorded, and that of the narrative recording them, that I must express myself intelligibly on this point, even at the risk of some

repetition. I have seen it urged as an argument for the *inspiration* of some of the historical books of the Old Testament, that they contain a *record* of many true prophecies. Now, undoubtedly, if a man *utters* a true prophecy, it is a very good reason for thinking him inspired; but what has this to do with his *recording the fact* of the utterance of such prophecies by another? And is it not as absurd to argue the inspiration of the history from the truth of the facts contained in it, as to argue the falsehood of the facts from the history not being inspired?

I am well aware that the subject of the inspiration of Scripture is one of too great importance, as well as too great difficulty, to be discussed fully on the present occasion. But this much seems to me clear; first, that by far the greatest part of the objections, not of a religious character, which have been brought against the Scriptures, affect *the inspiration of the historical books*, and that only. And, secondly, that the *credibility* of these books does in no way depend upon their *inspiration*, unless we maintain, that the testimony of all uninspired narratives may be rejected without blamable scepticism.

One particular class of those difficulties, which are not of a religious character, relates only indirectly either to the *inspiration* of the books of Scripture, or to their *authenticity*; what it affects

directly is their *genuineness*. It will be remembered, that a book is *genuine*, when it is really the production of its professed author; or, if it be anonymous, when its real author was in the same circumstances in which the nameless writer gives us to understand that he was. Strictly speaking, I should not call a book *not genuine* merely from the book itself having been ascribed by others to a wrong author, if the real author had done nothing himself to encourage the mistake; for, in denying the genuineness of a book, we mean, I think, to a certain degree, to impeach its authenticity; that is, in proportion to the deceit practised upon us by the writer, in misleading us as to his name and circumstances. But take, for instance, the little work on the government of Athens, which has been commonly ascribed to Xenophon. It is probably not Xenophon's; but I should not call it the less *genuine*, because the writer has given us no reason to think that he was Xenophon, and it is hard that his credit should suffer merely from a mistake of his readers. I think this is an important distinction; as, otherwise, the disproof of a book's *genuineness* may often be a very ambiguous expression, and may convey an impression unfavourable to the truth of the book, for which there is not the slightest ground. And this is the more important in scriptural criticism, because most of the objections brought against

the *genuineness* of the several books, as it is called, affects their genuineness only in what I consider the improper and nugatory sense of the term. For instance, the last six chapters in the Book of Zechariah are thought, by some persons, not to be the work of that prophet: but, as they do not at all profess to be so, I should avoid saying that they were *not genuine*, lest I should seem to attach to them something of the notion of a forgery, or intentional fraud, and so impeach their *authenticity*; whereas, in fact, if they are not Zechariah's, they have been ascribed to him through no fraud of the writer, but simply from a mistake of his readers or editors.

Such questions as these come to be regarded as difficulties, and as dangerous to religion, chiefly, I am persuaded, through the mistaken fear with which the advocates of religion regard them. As things now are, a man cannot prosecute a critical inquiry, as to the date and authors of the books of Scripture, without the fear of having his Christian faith impeached, should his conclusions, in any instance, be at variance with the common opinion: this deters some men from attempting it, and provokes others to do it in a spirit of bitterness, against what is called the orthodox party, and thus really to change a critical question into a polemical one. A young man of intelligence and critical habits, when commencing his

biblical studies, is placed accordingly under great disadvantages, because he finds a critical spirit considered, by one party, as nearly synonymous with a profane one, and actually rendered so by some of the writers of the opposite party in their own case. If, unable to understand the necessity of this union, he persists in examining the books of the Scripture critically, he finds himself immediately thrown upon the study of writers who are accused, whether truly or falsely, of latitudinarianism; if falsely, it makes him indignant against the party from which the charge proceeds; if truly, it may really impair his spirit of devotion. In either case, the impartiality of his judgment becomes endangered: dislike of the orthodox party is a temptation to him to reject their conclusions, and a spirit of profaneness blinds him to one most important part of the evidence in all spiritual questions; the harmony of such and such doctrines and principles, with the general spirit of God's revelations. In his own case then, his critical study of the Scriptures is likely to injure his faith; and if he feels this in time, and is saved from the evil of unbelief, a violent reaction is sometimes the consequence, and he joins the orthodox party in that very outcry against the dangers of a spirit of criticism, to which the existence of those dangers had been, in his own experience, mainly owing.

In connexion with this subject, I cannot but express my deep regret at the general neglect of the study of Hebrew in this country; and, especially, that it is neither required of candidates for ordination, nor as a qualification for degrees in theology at the Universities. How far it may be studied by individuals, it is, of course, impossible to know; but this I do know, that many clergymen, deeply engaged in the practical duties of their profession, must find it impossible then to begin it; although, had they been obliged in earlier life to make a certain progress in it, they might afterwards have carried it on to a high degree of proficiency. At any rate, the *publications* of English Hebrew scholars are not numerous, and men, in this study, as in so many others, are attracted by the high reputation of the German writers, to put themselves under their guidance. Whether this reputation be well founded or no, I know not, as I have to regret my total ignorance of Hebrew; but, judging from the indefatigable industry, and exceeding ability of the distinguished writers of Germany on other subjects, I should suppose that no man there could acquire a high character, in any branch of learning, without deserving it. But it is said that the Hebrew philologists are deeply infected with that same spirit which has characterized so many of the German theologians; and,

if it be so, no devout man can use their works habitually in his study of the Scriptures without great pain, or possibly without great danger. For the mere intellectual fault of over scepticism, he may, indeed, have been prepared, by his acquaintance with the German commentaries, and illustrations of profane literature: but there is in the rationalists a coldness and irreverence of tone, and so apparent an absence of all feeling of their own personal relations to God, as men and as sinners, while they are discussing, like indifferent spectators, his dealings with mankind in the abstract, that their intellectual fault is greatly aggravated by these moral defects. And, if we look for the cause of these defects, we shall find it in their exclusively literary habits, and in their want of Christian intercourse with their fellow-men, and especially with the poor; so that the Bible has presented itself to their minds more frequently in connexion with their studies than with their practice. The English clergy, on the contrary, enjoy such great moral advantages in the daily exercise of their parochial duties, that with them the deepest and boldest spirit of critical and philological research would be tempered by the healthy state of their spiritual affections, and would be alike secure and profitable to their readers and to themselves.

My object, in the foregoing pages, has been to

distinguish carefully between that Christian faith, which is the guide and comfort of our lives, and a variety of questions, historical, critical, scientific, &c., connected with parts of that Volume from which the grounds of our faith are derived. With Christian faith there must be no tampering; we cannot afford to propitiate an adversary by sacrificing the points which he objects to; we dare not describe the method of salvation as different from what God has appointed; we dare not content ourselves with any lower standard of holiness than God's perfect law. We must, indeed, "render unto God the things that are God's;" but we must also "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," that intellectual wisdom, which exercises over this world more than imperial dominion, may not be denied her lawful tribute. It is within her province to judge of all questions of science, of history, and of criticism, according to her own general laws; nor may her decisions on these matters be disputed by an appeal to the higher power of spiritual wisdom, who leaves such points wholly to her lower jurisdiction.

If it be said that this is a mere truism which nobody dreams of disputing, I have only to answer, that, whether disputed or not in theory, it is by no means rare to see it violated in practice. When a writer, not more distinguished for ability and learning than for his moderation and piety, published,

a few years since, an "Inquiry into the Origin of Sacrifice," he was immediately assailed with a cry of the *dangerousness* of his doctrines, and an historical question was represented as a matter of theology: and we know the vehemence with which some of the conclusions of geology, drawn from geological phenomena, have been resisted, as if these, too, interfered with our belief in revelation. In truth, it is no hard thing to make a rationalist, or an anti-rationalist,—meaning by this term one who is afraid to trust himself in the pursuit of truth, and who talks of the danger, perhaps of the profaneness of an inquiry, though its subject be strictly within the province of the intellect; but to make an enlightened, yet humble Christian,—one who feels the comparative worthlessness of all merely intellectual exercises, yet follows them steadily and fearlessly, in full faith that no truth can ever separate him from the love of the God of Truth,—this is hard to the extreme of difficulty. Deeply impressed with the profound knowledge of human nature exhibited in the Scriptures, and with the adorable wisdom of God's manner of dealing with it;—"convinced of sin and of righteousness," of his own indwelling evil, and of the perfect remedy for that evil provided by the death and resurrection of Christ;—living in the daily consciousness of possessing the earnest of the Spirit, and hoping therefore the more boldly for the full enjoyment of

those promises whose pledge and foretaste is so abiding a source of peace and joy ;—such a man's faith is far too deeply rooted to need the paltry aid of ignorance and fear. “ He that is spiritual judgeth all things :” all things, save the very principles of that spiritual wisdom from which his power of judgment is derived. With neither the unbeliever's prejudice on one side, nor on the other the prejudice of a faith not duly aware of its own immovable foundations, and approaching, therefore, with secret fear to the examination of questions really powerless to affect it, he will seek truth only, sure that whatever it may be, it must turn to the glory of God, and according to the promise, will, with all other things, work together for good to those who love God.

THE END.

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